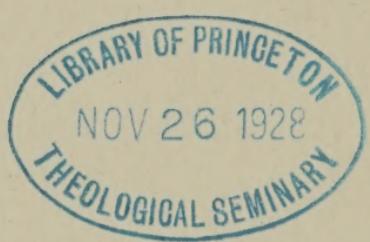


# THE YOUTH MOVEMENT

IN THE

AMERICAN  
LUTHERAN  
CHURCH

—  
GERALD JENNY



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The young people's movement  
in the American Lutheran





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LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S  
MOVEMENT



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THE  
YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT  
IN THE  
AMERICAN LUTHERAN  
CHURCH

*A Review and an  
Estimate*

BY  
GERALD JENNY



AUGSBURG PUBLISHING HOUSE  
MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.

1928

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Minneapolis, Minn.

TO MY FATHER  
John Jenny



## PREFACE

The Young People's Movement—what is it, and how old? What prompted its rise? How did it progress? What is its present extent?

What merits attach to young people's work? What has it done for young men and women in a spiritual sense? What are its relation and value to the Larger Parish?

The following history undertakes an answer to these questions for the movement in the Lutheran Church. Once the theme of a Master's thesis in rural sociology at the University of Wisconsin, advancing a view of the movement in the country church and containing a series of tables on the distribution of church and league among city, town, and country, the treatise now includes only the histories of the several synodical leagues, along with a summary and an estimate of the movement.

The treatise is not intended to be an exhaustive survey. My aim has been to offer an objective presentation of the movement in its several phases. Desiring to keep my statements fair and factual, I have sought an impartial view; I have tried, thruout the historical chapters, to avoid both invidious comparison and editorial comment.

Chapter III, a brief *résumé* of synodical history, is designed to furnish a background of understanding for the synodical divisions of young people's work. The order of presentation of subsequent chapters is chronological.

The struggle for organic union of young people's guilds is brought to the fore in the method of treatment in some of the histories. This is intentional insofar as protracted detail is designed to emphasize the reality of such struggle.

If "the hope of the future lies in the attitude of the young rather than in the transformation of the old,"<sup>1</sup> then

---

<sup>1</sup>Dean H. L. Russell.

it behooves us to know the Young People's Movement and to understand its aims. Should a perusal of the present volume awaken more solicitous concern for the young people among clergy and laity, and should a study of these pages challenge more intensive research in each of the leagues and lead others to chronicle the movement in greater detail, its purpose shall have been fulfilled.

Chicago, January, 1928.

G. J.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Officials of the various league organizations, as well as other pastors and laymen, have graciously afforded every necessary help in connection with the furtherance and completion of the task. The personal review by executives of their respective league chapters, I trust, assures the authenticity of the several histories. I also wish to acknowledge the valuable counsel of not a few in the treatment of the text; the courtesy of publishers in according the privilege of quoting numerous passages from book or periodical; and the generous assistance which a few friends have given me in the editing of the manuscript. I am especially indebted to Professor Elzer Tetreau, who first inspired this study, and to Professor John H. Kolb, whose helpful criticism pointed out fresh approaches.

—THE AUTHOR.



## CONTENTS

| CHAPTER  | PAGE     |
|--|----------|
| DEDICATION   | V        |
| PREFACE  | VII-VIII |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENT   | IX       |
| I. THE STATUS OF YOUTH IN THE CHURCH<br>IN EARLY TIMES                     | 3        |
| II. THE YOUTH MOVEMENT IN MODERN<br>TIMES                                  | 6        |
| III. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF AMERICAN<br>LUTHERAN SYNODS                  | 12       |
| IV. THE WALTHER LEAGUE OF THE SYNODICAL<br>CONFERENCE                      | 18       |
| V. THE LUTHER LEAGUE OF AMERICA OF THE<br>UNITED LUTHERAN CHURCH           | 41       |
| VI. THE AUGUSTANA SYNOD LUTHER LEAGUE                                      | 68       |
| VII. YOUNG PEOPLE'S UNIONS IN THE IOWA<br>SYNOD                            | 78       |
| VIII. THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S LUTHER LEAGUE OF<br>THE NORWEGIAN LUTHERAN CHURCH | 93       |
| IX. THE GENERAL LUTHER LEAGUE OF THE<br>JOINT SYNOD OF OHIO                | 115      |
| X. OTHER LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S<br>ORGANIZATIONS                          | 122      |
| XI. REVIEW AND COMPARISON  | 130      |
| XII. CAUSE AND APPRAISAL   | 139      |



LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S  
MOVEMENT



## CHAPTER I

### THE STATUS OF YOUTH IN THE CHURCH IN EARLY TIMES

Martin Luther was an early champion of young people.

The crying need of educating an illiterate, ignorant, and superstitious public first engaged his time in 1520, according to Trabert.<sup>1</sup> The Reformation and the printing press, this historian points out, were responsible for popularizing the Bible.

The education of the young people was made an important issue. Says Trabert:

"In 1524 Luther in a book urged the civil magistrates of all the cities of Germany to improve their schools, or to establish new ones for boys and girls. He wrote: 'I beg you all, my dear lords and friends, for God's sake to take care of poor youth, and thereby to help us all. So much money is spent year after year for arms, roads, dams, and innumerable similar objects. Why should not as much be spent for the education of youth?' This advice of Luther was heeded, and the result is that today Protestant nations are far ahead of Roman Catholic nations in popular education."<sup>2</sup>

*Counted Education*

*Imperative*

"I pray all of you," continued

Luther in this treatise, "for the sake of God and of youth, not to think slightlying of educational problems. . . . For it is a serious and great matter, at the heart of Christ and all mankind, that we help and advise the young folk."<sup>3</sup> And in 1530 he declared in his sermon on education:

"Had we but this verse,—'Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones,'<sup>4</sup>—wherein Christ tells us how

<sup>1</sup>Trabert, *Church History*, pp. 227-228.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 227-228.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Brunn, *Die Notwendigkeit und Praktische Ausfuehrung der Arbeit an der Konfirmierten Jugend*, p. 8. See also *Luthers Sämtliche Schriften*, Vol. X, col. 462, *St. Louis Edition*, 1892.

<sup>4</sup>*Matt. 18:10.*

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

much God, His Father, is concerned with the welfare of youth, we would conclude that among all deeds there is none greater or better than the proper training of the young people."<sup>5</sup>

Such utterances helped to place the fearless reformer in the forefront among early churchmen who professed interest in the interrelation of congregation and youth, and who sought effectual means to enhance the welfare of the young people, the church of the morrow.

### *Renaissance Proved Forerunner*

Others before Luther, indeed, had taken count of youth's status and had defended its cause.

Witness the signal success of the Mantuan Vittorino. A hundred years before Luther's epoch this noble exponent of critical humanism pointed the way to pedagogical reform. Maintaining a school for young men and women, he tutored them in the letters and arts then extant and classical. Physical training and recreation, too, found place in the daily curriculum. Nobility as well as commonalty sent their youths to study at his feet.<sup>6</sup>

Elsewhere, too, thruout Renaissance Italy rhetoricians had drawn pupils from many nations. But Luther blazed a more universal trail, insisting on policies which later laid the foundation of our modern system of public instruction.

### *Lay Awakening at Premium*

It must be recognized that Luther's scheme for the emancipation of a youth thwarted by

custom and steeped in ignorance was paternalistic in practice, tho not in purpose. A "revolt" of the young people was not expected. These had neither means nor energy. Perhaps they felt no call to change the existing order, pinning their hopes on prospects of a more satisfactory mode of life with advance in time. Surely there was no youth consciousness. Moreover, the Church of Rome,

<sup>5</sup>Brunn, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

<sup>6</sup>Vittorino DaFeltre's methods have been likened to those of Pestalozzi.

## YOUTH STATUS IN EARLY TIMES

still in the seat of political influence, was powerful to squelch local outbreaks. Lay organization was a non-entity and, until Luther's time, well-nigh impossible.

The change in the status of youth in the church properly was to come from without—thru the efforts of men who would see the purposelessness of religious oppression and who would sense a degree of responsibility toward the young people.

History is silent on the efforts of self-expression on the part of youth in the three hundred years between the Reformation and the early nineteenth century. The few frail sails of youth-awakening that appear on the religious horizon of the period are lost in a fog of indifference. One must look to more recent years to find the marks of desire apparent in young people to speak for themselves in matters touching the heart-strings of their religion.

## CHAPTER II

### THE YOUTH MOVEMENT IN MODERN TIMES

#### ABROAD

A definite youth movement, since the close of the World War, has assumed appreciable proportions thruout the civilized world. The youth of England, largely thru the "Workers' Educational Association" and thru student movements, are being disillusioned from the false idealism of the past. Germany has its "Jugendbewegung," France its "Jeune République;" in each country are found a score of similar movements.

Students in central Europe have found expression for their once latent "spirit of renaissance" in the "Student-sky Domov," an international student center in Prague. In Poland—where for centuries men have seen the world outside only thru the eyes of Rome; in Russia—where unrest has torn asunder all society; in Austria—where circumstances have forced a back-to-the-land movement—in all of central Europe there is evident a pronounced Youth Movement, eager to emancipate self and others from the social, the economic, the spiritual thraldom of the past.

Latin America is witnessing a "rising student tide." The young students of China have risen in judgment against the militaristic system. Likewise in Japan and Korea, the Youth Movement is in revolt against the old feudal order. And in India is manifest a similar determination among the young people to begin life anew.

*Spirit of Reform  
Sweeps Europe*

A renaissance intellectual, moral, and spiritual has captured the youth of all Europe, declare those who have studied the situation abroad. "The youth of the world are pointing the way to the new day which statesmen have failed to bring to pass," says Stanley

## YOUTH MOVEMENT IN MODERN TIMES

High.<sup>1</sup> Speaking of the national European movements, he writes:

"From among the students of Vienna and Prague must come whatever leadership will be found to bring about the social, political, economic, and spiritual reconstruction in central and eastern Europe. It is in the determination and common understanding born of their disillusionment and suffering that one finds hope that good may yet appear out of this post-war evil."<sup>2</sup>

Genuine international fellowship and the demand for peace are the chief characteristics of the youth movements abroad. The sixth "Congrès International de la Paix" (International Peace Congress), for example, was held at Bierville, France, in 1926, under the auspices of La Jeune République, a Catholic movement. Protestant, Catholic, and other religious organizations, as well as students, proletariat, and intermediate classes, were represented at this youth-gathering.

"In the new world built after the ideals of youth," prophesies the student of life in Europe,

"religion will have a more fundamental place than has ever been accorded to it. In almost every country where today a youth revolt is stirring, religious interests predominate. The focal center of the intellectual renaissance in China is Christianity; in India, in like manner, religious problems are the commanding problems before young students; the 'Wandervoegel' of Germany are religious mystics; throughout eastern Europe the students, face to face with life's greatest issues, are more eager for religious counsel than for any other."<sup>3</sup>

### *Norway Has Three Movements*

There are, moreover, distinct movements among the young people in the Protestant churches of northern Europe. Dr. O. Hallesby, professor at the Independent Theological Seminary at Oslo and leader of the conservative wing in the Lutheran Church of Norway, points to three organizations of young people in

<sup>1</sup>High, *Revolt of Youth*, p. 33.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 214.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

this church: the "Christian Young People's Societies," the "Inner Mission Young People's Societies," and the "Christian Endeavor" societies.

Of the Inner Mission Young People's Societies Dr. Hallesby says:

"This organization soon realized that if the youth of Norway were to be won for Christ—and it is in the days of youth that these can be won most easily—then it must try to reach them with the awakening Word, the call to repentance, which the other two societies did not especially have to give their own groups.

"In the Inner Mission Societies, the program is made up of testimonies, singing, prayer meetings, and a definite work to lead the young people to Christ. They also make it their aim to put the young people actively at work for Christ. These societies are growing steadily and will be one of the best means in the Church to gather the young people and keep them in the Church."<sup>4</sup>

Such are the movements abroad. For the greater part they are recent; moreover, they typify a revolt against the Church. Contrast with these the movement in America, where it has gained momentum for nearly fifty years, yet where the young people have been privileged to work with the Church—not against it.<sup>5</sup>

## AMERICAN MOVEMENTS

### *The Christian Endeavor*

The first Christian Endeavor Society was founded by Pastor Francis E. Clark, D.D., on February 2, 1881, in the Williston Congregational Church, Portland, Maine. The "Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor" now numbers 4,000,000 members in nearly 100,000 societies.<sup>6</sup> It is the official young people's organization for the Reformed Church in America, the Congregationalists, the Disciples of Christ, and the Quakers, and is represented to some extent in nearly every de-

<sup>4</sup>*Lutheran Church Herald*, VII, No. 52, p. 1555, December 25, 1923.

<sup>5</sup>This treatise is confined to the young people's movements within the Church and does not account for so-called youth movements in America which might be counted as corollary to the youth movements abroad.

<sup>6</sup>*Lutheran World Almanac*, 1924-1926, p. 75.

## YOUTH MOVEMENT IN MODERN TIMES

nomination. Its motto is "For Christ and the Church." The *Christian Endeavor World* is its official organ.

### *The Brotherhood of St. Andrew*

The "Brotherhood of St. Andrew," a body of men in the Protestant Episcopal Church, grew out of a young men's Bible class held in St. James' Church, Chicago, Illinois, and was organized on November 30, 1883. Its aim is the spread of Christ's Kingdom among young men, to be accomplished by direct personal contact and influence. Its rules are prayer and service.

The corporate work of the brotherhood includes the men's communion, the church attendance campaign, and the men's Bible classes. Practical deeds fostered by the society embrace Sunday School teaching, hospitality at the church door, parish visitations, religious work in hospitals and other institutions, lay reading and Sunday School superintending in new mission churches, enrollment of members for the confirmation classes, support of the practice of family prayer, and travelers' welfare. The brotherhood maintains a junior department for boys twelve to eighteen years old and publishes *St. Andrew's Cross*.

### *The Epworth League*

The "Epworth League," a voluntary organization of young people in the Methodist Episcopal Church, was organized at Cleveland, Ohio, on May 15, 1889. Omaha, Nebraska, witnessed the official adoption of the league by the General Conference of the church in May, 1892. There are 19,500 local chapters with 750,000 members. The *Epworth Herald* is the official organ. The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, has also adopted this form of organization and embraces 500,000 members. The *Epworth Era* is their official organ.

The object of the Epworth League is "to promote intelligent and loyal piety in the young members and friends

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

of the Church, to aid them in the attainment of purity of heart and constant growth in grace, and to train them in works of mercy and help.”<sup>7</sup>

### *The Baptist Young People's Union*

The “Baptist Young People’s Union of America” was organized at Chicago, Illinois, on July 8, 1891. Its object is to secure “the unification of the Baptist young people; their increased spirituality; their stimulation in Christian service; their edification in Scripture knowledge; their instruction in Baptist doctrine and history; and their enlistment in all missionary activity thru existing denominational organizations.”<sup>8</sup>

Other denominational young people’s leagues include the “Young People’s Christian Union” of the United Presbyterian Church; the “Young People’s Alliance” of the Evangelical Association; the “Keystone League of Christian Endeavor” of the United Evangelical Church in America; and the “Young People’s Christian Endeavor Union” of the United Brethren in Christ. The last-named league was organized on June 5, 1890.

Systematic Bible study is encouraged in all of these denominational young people’s unions, and training in Christian work is a common objective. Most organizations employ a weekly topic system.

### *The Lutheran Movements*

The problem of preparing youth for parish citizenship has long engaged the attention of leaders in the American Lutheran Church. While some synods have enlisted the parochial school in their endeavors to inculcate Lutheran doctrine, others have relied upon the Sunday School as a more flexible agency. All branches have counted on the confirmation vow as a safeguard to keep the growing generation within the Lutheran fold.

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<sup>7</sup>Erb, *Development of the Young People's Movement*, p. 72.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 81.

## YOUTH MOVEMENT IN MODERN TIMES

The distressing discovery that these measures alone would not keep young people from drifting, led to the hope of devising ways to assure the interest of the young people in the work of the Church after their confirmation. By the end of the nineteenth century the rise of distinctively Young People's Movements among the above-mentioned denominations suggested the beginning of similar ventures among Lutheran bodies.

In 1928 more than 230,000 young people in 5,500 local societies made up the organized Young People's Movement in the American Lutheran Church. The congregational guilds are federated into synodical leagues. Chapter III presents a brief historical background of Lutheran groups in the United States and Canada, and subsequent chapters deal with the history of the several young people's leagues in the Lutheran Church.

## CHAPTER III

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF AMERICAN LUTHERAN SYNODS

The Lutheran Church in America in 1927 numbered 16,900 congregations and 4,112,700 baptized members, more than 2,700,000 of whom had been confirmed. These were served by nearly 11,000<sup>1</sup> ministers.<sup>2</sup> The church comprises the remnant and posterity of a large proportion of emigrants from northern and eastern European countries, thru a period reaching back to pre-Revolution days and advancing as far as the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when immigration to the United States, with settlement of the Middle West, was at high tide.

The Lutheran Church is marked by divisions occasioned mainly by differences nationalistic and linguistic. Variations in practice, and to some extent in doctrine, also distinguish several synods. While geographical and political boundaries formerly separated independent synods, in recent years most bodies have gravitated organically toward unions professing common norms of faith and practice.

*Church Was Established  
In Many Branches* An historical *résumé* of the several synods<sup>3</sup> will help to point out the major divisions in the Lutheran Church, as well as pave the way toward an understanding of the Young People's Movement in that church.

Danish Lutherans are divided into two groups. The "Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America" was organized at Neenah, Wisconsin, in 1872. There are

<sup>1</sup>Includes retired list and *PP. emeriti*.

<sup>2</sup>The historical information in this chapter is adapted from the *Lutheran World Almanac*, 1921, pp. 66-116; and *ibid.*, 1928, summary table, p. 216.

<sup>3</sup>The order of treatment in this chapter is linguistic and chronological.

sixty-nine pastors, ninety-seven congregations, and 19,200 baptized members.

The "United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America" was established in 1896 and now includes 115 ministers, 182 congregations, and nearly 30,000 baptized members.

These two synods are represented in Danish settlements thruout the United States and Canada. The United Danish Church has a "Central Committee of Young People's Leagues,"<sup>4</sup> with 3,800 members in 190 local societies. The Danish Church has a "Danish United Young People's League."

*Finns Strongest in  
Upper Michigan*

Finns are scattered mainly over Massachusetts, northern Michigan, northern Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Oregon; Lutheran Finns are represented in three divisions. The "Finnish Apostolic Lutheran Church" was organized at Calumet, Michigan, in 1872. Most of its forty-four ministers are lay pastors. There are about one hundred congregations with 50,000 baptized members.

The "Suomi Synod," or "Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church of America," began to function as a separate body in March, 1890, when organization was effected at Calumet, Michigan. Sixty ministers serve 182 congregations with a baptized membership of 35,300 souls. This synod has a "Young People's Association" numbering seventy-five societies and about 4,000 members.

The "Finnish Evangelical Lutheran National Church," organized at Ironwood, Michigan, in October, 1900, numbers nineteen pastors, sixty-six churches, and 8,100 baptized souls.

*Joint Ohio  
Organized in 1818*

Seven hundred and thirty-two pastors, 1,017 congregations, and 256,600 baptized members constitute the "Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of

<sup>4</sup>*Cf. infra, p. 123.*

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

Ohio and Other States," established at Somerset, Ohio, in September, 1818. It embraces ten districts in the United States and one in Canada. Its young people's organization is called the "General Luther League of the Joint Synod of Ohio and Other States,"<sup>5</sup> and numbers 7,500 members in more than 300 societies.

The "Buffalo Synod" is made up of fifty-four congregations in the Great Lakes basin and numbers 11,100 baptized members and forty-one ministers. It was organized in 1845.

The "Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Iowa and Other States" is represented thruout the Middle West, in Texas, and on the West Coast. Established at St. Sebald, Iowa, in August, 1854, it now numbers 586 ministers, 947 congregations, and 214,300 baptized souls. It has a "Wartburg League"<sup>6</sup> of 135 local societies and 5,300 members, as well as a number of independent district federations.

*Synodical Conference  
Established in 1872*

The "Evangelical Lutheran  
Synodical Conference of North  
America" is an ecclesiastical fed-

eration formed at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1872. It comprises the "Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States," organized at Chicago, Illinois, in 1847; the "Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States," established at Milwaukee in 1850; the "Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church," formed in 1919 at Albert Lea, Minnesota, as a remnant of the former "Synod of the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church of America;" and the "Slovak Evangelical Lutheran Synod of America," organized at Braddock, Pennsylvania, in 1901.

The Synodical Conference numbers 3,925 ministers, 5,431 congregations, and 1,325,400 baptized souls. The "Walther League"<sup>7</sup> is the young people's organization coextensive with the conference. It is represented in near-

<sup>5</sup>Cf. pp. 115 ff.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. pp. 78 ff.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. pp. 18 ff.

## LUTHERAN SYNODICAL BACKGROUND

ly every state in the Union and in Canada and numbers about fifty thousand members in more than 1,500 societies.

The "Icelandic Evangelical Lutheran Synod in North America" was organized in January, 1885, at Mountain, North Dakota. Fifty-six congregations, numbering 7,900 baptized members and served by twenty ministers, compose the synod, which is confined to the northern tier of states and the central provinces.

### *First Scandinavian Synod Formed in 1846*

The "Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Eielsen's Synod," was the first Norwegian synod in this country. It was established at Jefferson Prairie, Wisconsin, in 1846; it now numbers six ministers and thirty-two congregations with 1,200 baptized souls.

The "Lutheran Free Church" was created in June, 1897, at Minneapolis, Minnesota. One hundred and thirty-four pastors serving 43,100 baptized members in 420 Norwegian churches in the central and western states constitute the synod. There is a "Young People's Federation."<sup>8</sup>

Independent Norwegian churches in Wisconsin and Minnesota organized the "Church of the Lutheran Brethren of America" in December, 1900, at Milwaukee. There now are twenty-seven ministers, thirty churches, and 1,600 baptized members.

### *Norwegians Merge in 1917*

June 9, 1917, marks the day when three independent Norwegian synods merged at St. Paul, Minnesota, to form the "Norwegian Lutheran Church of America." The "Hauge's Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Synod," organized as the Eielsen's Synod at Jefferson Prairie, Wisconsin, had existed since 1846; the "Synod of the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church

<sup>8</sup>Cf. pp. 124-126.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

of America," established at East Koshkonong, Wisconsin, since 1853; and the "United Norwegian Lutheran Church in America," established at Minneapolis, since 1890.

The Norwegian Lutheran Church is represented in nearly every state in the Union and throughout Canada. It numbers 1,362 pastors, 3,146 churches, and 488,100 baptized members. Its young people's federation of more than 1,600 societies and upwards of 100,000 members is known as the "Young People's Luther League."<sup>9</sup>

The "Scandinavian"<sup>10</sup> Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod of North America" was organized by Swedes and Norwegians at Clinton, Wisconsin, on June 5, 1860. It is composed almost entirely of Swedish congregations and comprises all Swedish Lutheran churches save a small number of eastern congregations which formerly were affiliated with the General Council and now are part of the United Lutheran Church.

The Augustana Synod numbers 823 ministers who serve 309,000 baptized members in 1,256 congregations in all parts of the United States and Canada. It embraces a Luther League organization of more than 600 local societies<sup>11</sup> and an "Augustana Foreign Missionary Society."<sup>12</sup>

### *1918 Marks "United" Merger*

The merging of three eastern groups into the "United Lutheran Church in America" was effected in New York City in 1918. The "General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States" had been formed in 1820 at Hagerstown, Maryland; the "General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America," at Reading, Pennsylvania, in December, 1866; and the "United Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the South," at Concord, North Carolina, in 1863.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. pp. 93 ff.

<sup>10</sup>The word "Scandinavian" was dropped from the name in the eighties; the Swedes and Norwegians had separated in 1870.

<sup>11</sup>Cf. pp. 69 ff.

<sup>12</sup>Cf. pp. 122 and 123.

## LUTHERAN SYNODICAL BACKGROUND

The United Lutheran Church now numbers 3,035 ministers who serve 3,875 congregations with 1,311,200 baptized members. While strongest in the Middle Atlantic states, the church is represented throughout the United States and Canada. Its official young people's federation is the "Luther League of America," with more than 950 local societies and 28,000 members.<sup>13</sup>

Practically every synod in its earlier years was almost entirely a foreign-speaking body—principally German or Scandinavian. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, however, there has been a gradual shifting to the language of the country.

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<sup>13</sup>*Cf.* pp. 41 ff.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE WALTHER LEAGUE OF THE SYNODICAL CONFERENCE

#### EARLY INDICATIONS

The movement culminating in the present Walther League goes back seventy-five years. Trinity, the mother church of Missouri Synod Lutheran congregations in St. Louis (Eighth and Lafayette Streets), embraced the first "Young Men's Association" (Jünglingsverein) within the synod. To support indigent students for the ministry was the outstanding aim of this society. Many young men's and young women's guilds thruout the synod later emulated the St. Louis prototype in their endeavors.<sup>1</sup>

##### *Issues*

Dr. C. F. W. Walther,<sup>2</sup> prime mover of this association, early sought to encourage pursuit of

*Universal Call* young people's work in all quarters. In 1851, four years after the Missouri Synod was organized and seven years after the founding of the Young Men's Christian Association in London, the *Lutheraner*, official synodical organ, voiced his appeal to all young men's associations in the synod.

Dr. Walther hoped to federate all these societies and to give the young men opportunity to serve the Church thru a league of their own. This luminary must be counted one of the earliest pioneers in young people's work among Protestant denominations in America,<sup>3</sup> and the first to foster a union of young people's societies.

Organization was effected in 1854, and Mr. M. E. Estel, a member of the Trinity guild, was chosen presi-

<sup>1</sup>*Lutheraner*, x, p. 120, 1854. Quoted in *Vereinsbote*, IV, No. 10, p. 1, May, 1896. Cf. *Walther League Messenger*, XXVI, No. 11-12, pp. 326 and 339, June and July, 1918.

<sup>2</sup>Later called the "father of the Synodical Conference," organized in 1872.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. *infra*, pp. 139 and 141.

## THE WALTHER LEAGUE

dent. Two years later the *Lutheraner* again carried the federation appeal to all young men's societies in the synod. The movement, however, expired within a few years. It is believed that the Civil War hastened dissolution,<sup>4</sup> and that pressure of work kept Dr. Walther, Pastor J. F. Buenger, and other leaders from giving further attention to the organization.<sup>5</sup>

### *"Old Trinity" Guild Prosper*

A different record, however, attaches to the Young Men's Association of "Old Trinity."<sup>6</sup> This guild later admitted young women to membership. Active today, the young people's society which Dr. Walther launched must be regarded as the first successful endeavor to organize young people's work in any Lutheran congregation.

Toward 1890, attempts were made to federate young men's societies of the Missouri Synod in Detroit, Michigan. Plans failed, the *League Messenger* has since pointed out, because men were reluctant to rest content with small beginnings.<sup>7</sup>

### *Discountenance Attempt at Union*

At about the same time appeared the Luther League movement in eastern centers, designed to establish an all-Lutheran young people's union. Ministers and lay leaders in the Synodical Conference, fearing heterodox tendencies, opposed the plan. The circumstance nevertheless emboldened not a few pastors and laymen to foretell general federation of young people's societies within the conference. These men believed that properly directed organization would bring beneficial results.

Thus began and ended early efforts to centralize young people's work in the Synodical Conference. There was

<sup>4</sup>Walther League Messenger, XXV, No. 11-12, p. 357, June and July, 1917.

<sup>5</sup>Vereinsbote, IV, No. 10, p. 1, May, 1896.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. pp. 139 and 141.

<sup>7</sup>Vereinsbote, IV, No. 10, p. 1, May, 1896.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

to arise, soon after, a more auspicious movement, destined to assume national and, later, international proportions.

### BEGINNINGS OF THE WALThER LEAGUE

Ten years of questioning consideration and intermittent effort preceded the founding of the Walther League. In 1882 members of the "Young Men's Association" ("Jungmänner Verein") of the Trinity Lutheran Church of Buffalo, New York (August Senne, pastor), feeling the need of coöperation for common ends, authorized a committee to confer with societies in other congregations.

*Scout Uncharted Seas* This committee sent circulars to pastors of Synodical Conference churches known to have young men's societies, and sought expression of opinion as to the feasibility of organizing a league of societies. Fifteen answers were received, with proposals too diverse to warrant projection. Matters then were dropped.

In 1888 correspondence between the Buffalo guild and the "Lutheran Young Men's Association" of Detroit, Michigan, renewed interest in united endeavor. By 1890 another committee was appointed by the Trinity association. This group now proposed first to combine all young men's societies of the Synodical Conference in Buffalo, and to make the joint organization the core from which the work might radiate to other cities.

*Pool Efforts and Unite* St. Andrew's Young Men's Society was the first to link itself to the movement. By 1892 joint committee action resulted in the creation of a temporary "General Union of Lutheran Young People's and Young Men's Associations in the Synodical Conference" ("Generalverband der Lutherischen Jugend- und Jungmänner Vereine der Synodal-Konferenz"), with a pro-

## THE WALther LEAGUE

viso calling for permanent organization, should enough societies affiliate.

Officers elected, all of Buffalo, were:

Mr. H. E. Gahwe, chairman;  
Mr. R. F. Kreinheder, secretary;  
Dr. W. C. Fritz, treasurer; and  
Messrs. V. Wurtz and F. W. Burow, directors.<sup>8</sup>

### Press Serves the Cause

This spirit of achievement prompted members to launch a monthly organ, *Vereinsbote* (*League Messenger*), in June of the same year. As a rallying point for league enthusiasm, the magazine from the start carried the organization appeal to young men and women in congregations thruout the East and Middle West, where it was sent by the Buffalo societies. Ministers like August Senne, J. Sieck, and A. T. Hanser (editor of the house organ), all of Buffalo, assisted with articles on the need and value of young people's work.

From the beginning the *League Messenger* fostered the new movement by advocating support of indigent students for ministerial and teaching professions, as well as of works of Christian mercy. As mirror to the growing need of attention to the welfare of Lutheran transients, the official mouthpiece constantly stressed the importance of a well-planned hospice system. As early as 1893 it urged societies to appoint welfare committees. The present extensive travelers' welfare system of the Walther League, to date one of the outstanding achievements of the organization, owes its origin to this early endeavor.

The *League Messenger* encouraged assembly for educational meetings and the establishment of church libraries of Lutheran literature. It was recognized, too, that in order to keep young pepole from drifting into societies outside the synodical fold, proper and adequate entertainment must be provided. An entertainment committee was appointed, while the paper opened

<sup>8</sup>Walther League Messenger, XXXI, No. 10, p. 431, May, 1928.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

its columns to discourses on debates, lectures, and recreation.

### *Call First Convention*

A young men's society in Danbury, Connecticut, and another in Fort Wayne, Indiana, were the first to affiliate in August, 1892. Much encouraged, Buffalo members now called a meeting of Trinity, St. Andrew's, and Emmaus guilds for February 21, 1893. At this meeting it was resolved to call "a general convention of all young people's and young men's societies of the Synodical Conference, to be held at Buffalo, New York, May 20, 1893."<sup>9</sup> Thru the *League Messenger* each society was invited to send at least one delegate.

Sixteen delegates, including seven from Buffalo and others from New York City, Brooklyn, and Rochester, New York; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Fort Wayne, Indiana; Dallas, Texas; Detroit, Michigan; and Danbury, Connecticut, met on the appointed day. On May 23, the fourth day, a constitution was adopted with the following aims:

- "1. To preserve local societies from affiliating with heterodox organizations.
- "2. To keep the young people with the Church of true Lutheran believers.
- "3. To promote existing societies.
- "4. To promote sociability within and among individual societies."<sup>10</sup>

Six hundred and ninety-three young people of the Synodical Conference were represented by the delegates, who elected the following officers for the year:

- Mr. H. E. Gahwe, Buffalo, New York, president;  
Mr. Charles Bartelt, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, vice-president;  
Mr. A. J. Beuermann, New York City, recording secretary;  
Mr. R. F. Kreinheder, Buffalo, corresponding secretary;  
and  
Mr. F. W. Burow, Buffalo, treasurer.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 481 ff.

<sup>10</sup>*Vereinsbote*, IV, No. 6, p. 2, January, 1896.

## THE WALTHER LEAGUE

Directors included Dr. W. C. Fritz, Pastor A. T. Hanßer, and Mr. H. E. Gahwe, Buffalo; and Messrs. F. C. Spiegel, Fort Wayne, and J. Kaltenstein, Danbury, Connecticut.<sup>11</sup>

At the second convention, held in the Emmaus Church at Fort Wayne in 1894, it was decided, on the suggestion of Pastor Sieck, to name the organization in honor of the father of the Synodical Conference—Dr. Walther, who forty years before had issued the first general call for a united young people's endeavor. Accordingly, "Walther Liga" (Walther League) was the name chosen. This convention adopted an official emblem and launched a campaign to organize district leagues thruout the conference.

### *See Danger of Drifting*

If there was an outstanding fear among clergy and laity concerning the young people, it

related to the danger of drifting into questionable associations. When the New England district of the Walther League was organized at Holyoke, Massachusetts, in 1895, Pastor August Brunn, of Holyoke, warned the delegates that "we must preserve youth from estranging alliances. While we recognize certain dangers in establishing societies of young people, yet a far greater danger lurks without."<sup>12</sup> He enjoined all ministers to welcome the movement.

Elsewhere, too, ministers sensed the importance of carrying on young people's work. Even in 1889 the Wisconsin district of the Missouri Synod, in annual session, had recognized the value of a league for young people, and had frankly encouraged the formation of societies. "To preserve adolescent youth," contended the synodical report for that year, "it is not enough to warn them against fellowship with questionable societies or unionistic associations, dishonorable or unwholesome plays, theaters, balls, circuses, etc. Their preservation demands that

<sup>11</sup>Walther League Mesesnger, XXXI, No. 10, p. 431 ff., May, 1923.

<sup>12</sup>Vereinsbote, IV, No. 5, p. 2, December, 1895.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

we give them a substitute for all this, in place of the privilege we are taking from them.”<sup>13</sup>

*Deplores Isolation of Rural Groups* Practically all of the societies in the league up to 1895 classified as urban. No concerted effort had yet been made to reach out to country guilds. Lamenting the circumstance, Pastor Hanser, in addressing the 1895 convention at Cleveland, Ohio, asserted that “isolation is the cause of the weakness of the rural young people’s leagues. Nevertheless the Walther League ought to flourish in the country.”<sup>14</sup>

In anticipation of the fourth annual convention at Milwaukee the *League Messenger* in May, 1896, displayed an optimistic note. Commenting on the labor of four years, Pastor Hanser declared:

### TAKE COUNT OF PROGRESS

“Progress has come, and not without divine blessings. Local societies now number forty. . . . Chief among accomplishments has been the awakening to a clear recognition of Lutheran and synodical consciousness. . . .

“The Walther League has awakened a renewed spirit in the original societies, and it has called forth new societies in other congregations. Even in the country several societies have been organized. . . .

“The league has been instrumental not only in keeping youth with the Church, but even in leading non-churched young people into the fold. Such blessed ways of serving the Church truly deserve the Church’s support.

“Can a cause like this, which seeks to preserve and secure the young people for the Church, be considered unnecessary? Can the sacrifices we make for the young people be too great? Let us hold fast our treasure—the youth of the Church!”<sup>15</sup>

### PROTRACTED ECLIPSE

Irresolution marked the movement generally during the decade of 1900 to 1910. Fears and misgivings on the

<sup>13</sup>Quoted in *Walther League Messenger*, XXV, No. 11-12, p. 346, June and July, 1917. Cf. also *Vereinsbote*, IV, No. 10, p. 1, May, 1896.

<sup>14</sup>*Vereinsbote*, IV, No. 5, p. 7, December, 1895.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, IV, No. 10, p. 2, May, 1896.

## THE WALTHER LEAGUE

part of clergy and laity hampered it. Many societies, too, magnified the social phase to the injury of higher league objectives.<sup>16</sup>

### *Brook Much Opposition*

Numerically and otherwise, the Walther League was not progressing normally. Open hostility and doubting scrutiny from many quarters without, as well as weakness and indifference within, threatened failure. Pastor William Dallmann, D.D., of Milwaukee, editor of the English section of the *Walther League Messenger* in 1917, averred that "the league had to wage a long war for existence and recognition."<sup>17</sup>

From time to time, however, devoted church leaders defended the young people's league, warning pulpit and pew alike that the Church of the morrow ever looks to the young people of the day, and that something must be done to keep them with the Church.

### *Champions Befriend Movement*

Among those who encouraged the league endeavor was Dr. A. L. Graebner, member on the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, and Aristotle in his field. In 1889 this great Lutheran scholar, in an article in the *Theological Quarterly*, insisted that "the young people are an important element in the Church. Several of the best of present and future interests are centered in them." Reminding his co-workers that youth ever is subject to manifold dangers, he pleaded that "we must guard them against baneful influences, and satisfy the needs peculiar to the young people."<sup>18</sup>

Another champion was Pastor Brunn, an active participant in the creation of the New England district of the Walther League. In 1908 he addressed the New

<sup>16</sup>*Souvenir of Welcome to Thirty-First Convention*, Detroit, Michigan, p. 15, 1923; also *Walther League Messenger*, XXVI, No. 11-12, p. 333, June and July, 1918.

<sup>17</sup>*Walther League Messenger*, XXV, No. 11-12, p. 357, June and July, 1917.

<sup>18</sup>Brunn, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

England conference of the Missouri Synod on "The Need and Practical Performance of the Work among Our Confirmed Youth," pointing out that when the young people's movement began, there was neither precedent nor experience to guide the leaders. He regarded the young people as the greatest and most important mission field of the synod.<sup>19</sup> The *League Messenger*, too, under Pastor Hanser's able editorship, strove to maintain *esprit de corps*, always holding the objects of the league in view.

The Walther League reached its crisis in 1910. From forty societies in 1896, membership had increased to but seventy. Only fifteen of these guilds had supported the league financially during the previous year.

### *League Turns a Corner*

A circular letter depicting circumstances brought prompt reaction. Fifty-six societies sent delegates to the national convention at Jackson, Michigan, in 1910. This gathering created the office of general field secretary, to which Mr. F. A. Klein, of Fort Wayne, was elected.

Despite neglect, the decade of trial was not without fruit. From the beginning, an indigent students' fund was solicited. Receipts were communicated to synodical treasuries.

Dr. W. C. Fritz, a member of the first national executive board, was the first to advocate publicly that young women's societies be welcomed to membership. By 1900 equal voting privileges were granted to women. In the same year a motto, suggested by Pastor C. F. Ruesskamp, of Buffalo, was adopted—*Pro Aris et Focis* (For Altar and Fireside). Intensive hospice work also was begun by the Luther Society of Rochester, New York. This innovation foreshadowed one of the greatest endeavors of the league.

In 1901 the league provided a home in Buffalo to accommodate Lutheran visitors at the Pan-American Ex-

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<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 1-42.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

position. In 1903, \$500 was raised for a Luther statue, unveiled at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, on June 14. In 1904 a temporary hospice was established for Lutheran visitors at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition at St. Louis. In the same year the league pledged active support of the Lutheran sanitarium at Wheat Ridge, Colorado.

### *Conference Promises Support*

The league in 1906 appealed to the Synodical Conference, in session at Chicago, to give systematic attention to the confirmed young people. In answer to the cry this body resolved to encourage its synods and their congregations to solicit in every possible way the welfare of youth.<sup>20</sup> The junior phase of league work also was considered for the first time in 1906.

The year 1910 marks the beginning of new pages of progress in the Walther League. For seventeen years—since its inception in 1893—the movement had been generally misunderstood. The appointment of a general field secretary now was to create goodwill thru personal visits everywhere, to mollify misgiving, and to usher in a new era for the league.

"Thru the Walther League," asserted Pastor Hanser, "the young people's question was made one of the important issues of the church."<sup>21</sup>

### THE PERIOD OF EXPANSION

The creation of the office of field secretary heralded a period of steady expansion. Besides traversing the country to explain the league's purposes in uniting all young people's societies, and to urge affiliation, Mr. Klein used the power of the press to tear down opposition. Tracts were broadcast thruout the Missouri Synod, and articles bearing on the Young People's Movement appeared in

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup>*Walther League Messenger*, XXVI, No. 11-12, p. 324, June and July, 1918.

## THE WALTHER LEAGUE

synodical papers. Soon many congregational guilds had only to be approached with the message, in order to be persuaded to join the league.

### *Wheat Ridge Endeavor Gains Ascendency*

The Wheat Ridge Sanitarium campaign became the league's second major activity. With enthusiasm and sympathy for the needs of the institution well established, the directors of the sanitarium in 1918 suggested a campaign for a modernly equipped structure. Accepting the challenge, the league at once set about to solicit a fund of \$200,000. This "monument of gratitude" was formally opened in 1921. The cost rose to \$250,000, but all debts were effaced by the end of 1923. By action of the 1927 convention at St. Louis, the sanitarium became Walther League property. Since 1920 the league also has supervised the annual sale and distribution of Wheat Ridge Christmas seals. Proceeds, the only source of support for the maintenance of the institution and its charity cases, have risen to more than \$55,000 annually.

Other significant advances of the Walther League in the eight years preceding 1918 include the departure from German to English as the official convention language, beginning in 1911; the calling of Mr. A. A. Grossmann, of Milwaukee, to the editorship of the *League Messenger* and to the business management of the league in 1913; the encouragement of junior work in local guilds; the call to more diligent and systematic Bible study; and the raising of a \$15,000 fund to assist the Synodical Conference in keeping service men supplied with Lutheran literature during the World War. By 1917, 296 local societies had joined the ranks, while the total membership numbered 18,736 individuals, with 6,047 subscriptions to the house organ.

At the end of the first twenty-five years the Walther League held fast to the same objective which had inspired its founders: viz., service to the Church. In the main, two blessings were visible—the spirit of solidarity had

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

become manifest among the young people of the Synodical Conference; and Lutheran hospices had been established in several of the larger cities.

Speaking of the first quarter century of endeavor, Pastor F. Pieper, of Cleveland, Ohio, said in 1918:

"Tho new features have been added, and, owing to its growth, the scope of its activities has been widened, the Walther League today is dominated by the very same spirit that guided its founders."<sup>22</sup>

***Begin Second Quarter in Earnest*** The ten years from 1918 to 1928 are epochal in the annals of the Walther League. Full-time secretar

ships, including the offices of executive, hospice, junior, educational, and summer camp secretary, were created. Hospice work was reorganized. Fourteen hospices (homes for Lutheran travelers) were established and chartered. The junior phase came into its own. Support of foreign missionaries was assumed, and missionary education stimulated thru the conduct of mission study classes. An educational department was instituted, with systematic Bible study as the central theme. The summer conference camp movement was set abroach. A correspondence school and a reading course were begun in 1926, and lyceum tours were launched in many districts. The message of Lutheranism, too, was quickened thru young people's support of the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau.

The 1918 convention at Buffalo provided for a hospice system calling for district hospice boards and hospice committees; local central committees for places with more than one society; and an international committee to keep district and local committees informed. The gathering also authorized the appointment of a committee for work among Lutheran students attending state institutions of higher learning.

During the following fiscal year, travelers' welfare work was directed largely toward the non-league young

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<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, XXVI, No. 11-12, p. 323, June and July, 1918.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

people's societies. A series of informative letters and inquiries, addressed to 1500 Synodical Conference pastors, brought but forty replies.<sup>23</sup>

This unexpected measure of clerical unconcern prompted the league in its 1919 convention at Chicago to urge all district hospice boards to present the plan, scope, and manner of conducting hospice work before district meetings and conferences of the synods, as well as before society meetings. Officials felt that if the new hospice endeavor was to be put on a firm foundation nationally, every pastor in the conference must be made familiar with the movement.

### *Call Full-time Secretaries*

In 1920, ten years after the Walther League had passed its crisis, the office of full-time executive secretary was created. This act marks another milestone in the history of the league. Under the guidance of Pastor Walter A. Maier, of Boston, Massachusetts, first full-time secretary, and his assistant, Pastor Paul G. Prokopy, of Plymouth, Massachusetts,<sup>24</sup> the league was destined to advance in greater measure.

The international hospice board early established a code of rules for local hospice workers. A platform of twenty planks, devised especially for the individual society, was adopted in 1921.<sup>25</sup>

Hospice work was given special impetus in 1922 when, at the Omaha, Nebraska, convention, the office of full-time hospice secretary was created. Pastor Erwin Umbach, of Muskogee, Oklahoma, was called to this position on October 6, 1923.

Another movement associated with the hospice department was the affiliation of Lutheran student chapters. The first of these was established at the University of Chicago in 1922. In the same year the first

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, XXVIII, No. 1, p. 21, August, 1919.

<sup>24</sup>Pastor Prokopy succeeded to the secretaryship in 1922, when Pastor Maier was called to the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

<sup>25</sup>*Walther League Messenger*, XXX, No. 4, p. 128, November, 1921.

## THE WALTHER LEAGUE

student mission with a full-time pastor within the Synodical Conference, at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, joined the league as an associate member society.<sup>26</sup>

### *Hospice Work One of Outstanding Endeavors*

By 1927 travelers' welfare work was carried on by 1,229 hospice secretaries active in more than 1,350 communities of the United States and Canada. Twenty districts reported that, in the previous fiscal year, 5,279 strangers and 384 students had been visited and directed to churches, while 435 persons were directed to lodgings, and employment found for sixty-nine. Removal notices also were issued for 567 Lutherans. District hospice committees have been created to cover nearly every state in the Union and province in the Dominion. A *Hospice Directory*, carrying the names and addresses of all hospice workers, has been printed annually since 1924. In 1927, eight thousand copies were circulated among all pastors and teachers of the Synodical Conference as well as among league workers.

Visitation at institutions of mercy and in private homes has engaged the service of many young men and women in pursuit of hospice work promoted especially by the central hospice committees in the larger cities. "Big brother and big sister work" has been initiated by the St. Louis committee. Leaguers elsewhere, too, have been active in the spreading of holiday cheer among the poor and sick.

The 1920 convention at Evansville, Indiana, gave impetus to educational work and to the junior phase. An educational committee was appointed, and a program devised with suggestions for religious, literary, and social features.

In 1921 the executive board created an educational de-

<sup>26</sup>The student chapter movement, however, has remained practically quiescent and has not found a permanent place in the league economy. It was believed in some quarters that a student district, to be governed by alumni rather than undergraduates, might be formed when fifteen student chapters should affiliate with the league organization. However, recent tendencies have taken another direction. Cf. pp. 128-129.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

partment consisting of topic, lecture, literature, and summer conference committees. The pioneer and inventive work of Pastor Karl Kretzschmar, of Fort Smith, Arkansas, as chairman of the topic committee, early brought topic study to the fore as the cardinal endeavor of this department.

### *Programs Prove Diversity of Endeavor*

By 1923 the department instituted a slide bureau for illustrated lectures on such subjects as Bible study, hymnology, church history, missions, Synodical Conference organization, Walther League work, American history, and travel. In 1926 lyceum tours with "speakers' lists" for every section of the country were added to the already extensive program. In the same year separate reading courses for juniors and seniors were established under the direction of Mr. M. J. Roschke, of St. Louis, a member of the board for young people's work of the Missouri Synod. The Walther League School of Correspondence, under the direction of Dr. P. E. Kretzmann, popular convention speaker of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, also was created in 1926.

The general office, established in Milwaukee in 1918 and removed to Chicago in 1922, serves as a clearing-house for all societies availing themselves of the league's manifold service. This office now employs regularly a force of approximately fifteen persons.

In September, 1923, the executive board called Pastor J. M. Bailey, of Milwaukee, to the office of full-time educational secretary. Pastor Bailey entered upon his office on January 15, 1924. Under his leadership the more recent educational endeavors were introduced; in 1925 the topic system, the mainstay of the educational program, was extended to cover church doctrine, Lutheran confessions, church history, Lutheran biography, practical church life, and current public issues.

## THE WALTHER-LEAGUE

### *Launch Summer Camp Movement*

The more outstanding activities of the educational department have included, in addition to the topic endeavor; the promotion of Bible study groups with the use of Professor Theodore Graebner's quarterly, the *Bible Student*,<sup>27</sup> and the establishment of fourteen district summer conference camps in the United States and Canada, notably the permanent camps at Arcadia, Michigan, and Lutherford, Pocono Summit, Pennsylvania. The former was opened in the summer of 1923, with a program of training for leadership in hospice, missions, education, and publicity endeavors. "The spirit of Arcadia," said Pastor Prokopy in support of this movement in 1924, "is Christian recreation and association, together with Christian information and education."<sup>28</sup> On January 1, 1928, Mr. W. F. Weiherman, of St. Louis, active in the development of the Arcadia movement since its inception, was called to Chicago as full-time camp director.

An international recreational committee, which keeps abreast of modern developments in the field of social recreation, now provides material for entertainment and play for young people in both city and country. Winter conferences, designed to train for league leadership thru a series of six or eight weekly meetings, have also been instituted in many districts since 1925.

The "systematic mission endeavor," advocated first as a soul-saving campaign in 1923, was put in operation early in 1925 thru a committee organized by Pastor Bailey. To prepare young people for effectual parish work is the mainspring of the endeavor. With the help of Dr. Kretzmann's *While It Is Day*, the official booklet, thousands of leaguers and other congregational workers have addressed themselves to the task of winning the unchurched and of assisting the pastor in related ways.

<sup>27</sup>The *Bible Student* first appeared in 1922 after the Omaha convention.

<sup>28</sup>*Walther League Messenger*, XXXII, No. 10, p. 557, May, 1924.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

### 1917 Is Pivotal Year for Juniors

Junior activities of the Walther League date back to the 1917 convention at Fort Wayne, when an international committee on junior league work was appointed.<sup>29</sup> The junior endeavor, however, was not strongly urged until 1920. At the Milwaukee convention in the following year, Miss Hulda Eickhoff, of Indianapolis, Indiana, was appointed junior secretary. A junior constitution was adopted at the Omaha gathering in 1922. Here, too, resolutions were passed to expedite the work and to make the junior society the "training school"<sup>30</sup> for the senior guild.

Professor E. H. Engelbrecht, of Concordia Teachers' College, River Forest, Illinois, international field secretary of the league since 1920, in vindicating the junior endeavor declared in 1920:

"In some societies the newly confirmed are at once invited to join the young people's society, but experience has shown that the older members and the young ones will not mix well, and this is not surprising. Their ideas, their ways of thinking and doing, their feelings and sentiments are too much at variance to enable them to work well together. It will therefore be preferable to have a special junior section in each society, with its own officers, its own meetings, and its own line of work."<sup>31</sup>

### Experience Rapid Growth

To encourage extension of the junior movement, two publications, *Concordia Junior Messenger* and *Junior Bible Student* (the latter the official publication of the Junior Walther League, edited by Dr. Kretzmann), were launched after the Omaha convention in 1922. Junior societies soon sprang up everywhere. Between July, 1922, and April, 1923, the junior Walther League gained more local chapters than did the senior division in its first twenty-five years. By the end of the

<sup>29</sup>The league had become international in scope when five Canadian societies were admitted to membership in 1916.

<sup>30</sup>Cf. *Walther League Messenger*, XXX, No. 8, p. 75, October, 1921.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, XXVIII, No. 10, p. 380, May, 1920.

## THE WALTHER LEAGUE

first year of intensive junior work, 162 junior societies were enrolled in twenty-six states.

By 1924 the league numbered 1,106 senior and 231 junior societies—a total of 1,337. At the St. Paul, Minnesota, convention in that year it was recommended that, since confirmation is the choicest time for gaining juniors, all junior societies be encouraged to receive the newly confirmed. The 1925 convention at San Francisco, California, caught the refrain. This gathering urged coöperation between district junior committees and district field secretaries, so that congregations with large members of catechumens might be impressed with the importance of junior work.

### *Endow Christian Embassy in Orient*

The Walther League entered the foreign mission field in February, 1921, pursuant to a call from the *Lutheraner*. The movement started with the appeal, "A penny a month from every leaguer will support two missionaries of Christ."<sup>32</sup> Enthusiasm was rife. Five missionaries were assigned by the synodical board to foreign fields by the summer of the same year, financed by four districts and the league at large. Support of another missionary was pledged by a fifth district in October.

By 1926 the entire league and seventeen individual districts supported fourteen foreign missionaries and native workers and thirteen native students in China and India; one home missionary in Germany; and twelve indigent students at home. In 1924, medical missions were assisted thru league support of Dr. Theodore Doederlein, of Chicago, who represented the church in India.

Other recent achievements of the organization include support of the Wisconsin Synod's Indian mission in Arizona; relief for the destitute in Germany, amounting to fifty tons of clothing in 1922 and to 150 tons in 1923; and support of radio broadcasting station KFUO at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to the extent of \$7,000, or one-half of its erection costs.

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<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, XXIX, No. 7, p. 198, Feb., 1921. The league provided the funds while the authorized synodical boards sent the missionaries.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

The "greater service program," ushered in by the 1926 convention at Baltimore, Maryland, according to Pastor Prokopy, was designed to embrace "a greater Bible study endeavor, a stronger educational department, more powerful junior and hospice departments, and a more helpful missionary education endeavor."<sup>33</sup>

During the fiscal year 1926-1927, Walther League members contributed \$14,000 for foreign missions and \$10,000 for home missions. Besides, in a few instances, congregational societies and even individual members assumed responsibility for the support of native students on the foreign mission field.

### *Vest Responsibility in Districts*

Comprehensive as the work of the central offices has grown, the international body in recent years has sought to decentralize the carrying out of its programs by deputing this task to the district executive boards and by concerning itself more and more with the shaping of national policies.

In quest of better understanding of league problems as well as of closer relationship between the district workers and the international leaders, the league executive board, together with the paid secretaries, now endeavors to meet in conference annually with each of the thirty-seven district executive boards. Since the 1924 convention at St. Paul, the district presidents have been made *ex officio* members of the international convention resolutions committee. Annual conferences between all district presidents and the international leaders, likewise, are designed to pool the aims of many districts and to stabilize the work nationally. All districts now publish periodical bulletins—most of them in printed form.

### *Trace Advance to Leaders and Conventions*

The signal growth of the Walther League since its crisis in 1910 can be traced, in the main, to two factors: outstand-

<sup>33</sup>Walther League Yearbook, 1926, p. 3.

## THE WALTHER LEAGUE

ing leadership and stewardship, and inspiring annual conventions. Most active in guiding the destinies of the league has been Mr. A. A. Crossmann, since 1919 president and twice reelected over his protest.<sup>34</sup> The work of Mr. E. J. Gallmeyer, Fort Wayne, as chairman of the executive board for several years; of Pastor Paul Miller, Fort Wayne, for more than ten years sole minister on the board, and ardent supporter of the young people's cause at the triennial conventions of the Missouri Synod; of Mr. F. A. Schack, Fort Wayne, for many years treasurer of the league; and of Mr. Klein and Professor Engelbrecht, who as general field secretaries helped to establish ten new districts in 1919 and 1920;—the contribution of these able and devoted leaders must be recognized. From a membership of seventy societies in 1910, the turning point, the league grew to 1,526 guilds in 1927 with a membership of about fifty thousand. Today the league also coöperates with young people's groups of the Synodical Conference in South America, Germany, and Australia.

Commenting on the value of national conventions, Pastor Paul Lindemann, of St. Paul, editor of the *American Lutheran*, wrote in 1924:

"Walther League conventions have become events of far-reaching influence in the work of our Lutheran Church. They are doing much to harness the tremendous force of youthful energy to worthwhile projects in the upbuilding of the Kingdom of Christ."<sup>35</sup>

<sup>34</sup>An example of the confidence reposed in leadership inspired by the challenge of young people's work and manifested in the despatch of its program of endeavors, is seen in the calling of Pastor W. A. Maier, executive secretary of the Walther League from 1920 to 1922, to a full professorship on the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in 1922; as well as in the selection of Mr. A. A. Grossmann, who since 1913 had served the league as business manager, editor, executive secretary, and, —since 1919, as president, to the assistant managership of Concordia Publishing House at St. Louis in 1925. As a recognition of outstanding ability and service on the part of church and lay leaders, these acts bear witness to the merit of league work of the first water.

<sup>35</sup>*Walther League Messenger*, XXXII, No. 10, p. 550, May, 1924.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

### *Restate Early Aim*

The 1925 convention at San Francisco, California, in reëmphasizing the league's motto, *Pro Aris et Focis*, resolved "that all leaguers bend their efforts to the important task of preserving the home, maintaining the family altar, and combating the baneful influences which seek to disrupt the ties and to destroy the life of the Christian home."<sup>36</sup>

Resolutions passed by the thirty-fourth convention at Baltimore in 1926 included authorization of the filming of motion pictures to portray the league's departmental endeavors; approval of a \$52,000 budget for the year's administrative and non-administrative expenses; and a plea for extension of the league movement to the church's foreign mission congregations in China and India.<sup>37</sup>

The importance of continuing junior work unabated was reëmphasized by the 1927 convention at St. Louis. The deaconess endeavor was brought to the fore, and by resolution, societies were enjoined to support the movement financially where members embrace this commendable task. The creation of scholarship funds for indigent students also was encouraged. Opportunity to view the new Concordia Seminary campus attracted many of the 1,400 leaguers who registered at this year's gathering.

### *Synods Give Sanction*

Much heartening encouragement has been accorded to the Walther League movement on the part of the Missouri Synod in recent years. In its 1920 convention at Detroit, the synod granted official recognition to the league. Similar resolutions adopted by the 1921 convention of the synod's western district elicited the following remarks from Pastor Maier, then executive secretary of the league and editor of the *Walther League Messenger*:

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, XXXIV, No. 1 and 2, p. 31, August and September, 1925.

<sup>37</sup>*Walther League Yearbook*, 1926, pp. 14-21.

## THE WALTHER LEAGUE

"We cannot construe this action as anything but a decided step in the right direction. Since the work of the league is the work of the Church in a most preeminent sense, and since the Church needs the league as the league needs the Church, there are strong and compelling reasons which recommend that the organized form of young people's work, as conducted by our league, be made part and parcel of the Church's official work. As other denominations are happy to guard and further the work of their young people's organizations, so should our Church welcome the opportunity of taking over the united loyalty of the many thousands of our young people who are only too happy to give to their Church a large measure of devotion."<sup>38</sup>

The Norwegian Synod of the Synodical Conference, meeting in 1922 at Madison, Wisconsin, adopted the Walther League as its official synodical young people's organization. The Missouri Synod in its 1923 convention at Fort Wayne likewise reaffirmed its position toward the movement. By resolution, this body recommended universal affiliation with the league.

## RECAPITULATION

*Church Strong in Country, League in City* The Synodical Conference in 1925 numbered more than 1,250,000 baptized members in 4,043 congregations served by 3,503 active pastors in the United States and Canada. Thirteen hundred and ninety-one, or 39.7 per cent of these ministers then resided in cities of more than 5,000 population; 289, or 8.3 per cent, in towns of 2,500 to 5,000 population; and 1,823, or 52.0 per cent, in places of less than 2,500 or in the open country.<sup>39</sup>

Assuming that, on the average, each city and town pastor serves a single congregation, then there were 1,680 city and town churches. The balance of 2,363 churches must be assigned to the 1,823 rural ministers. The distribution of congregations, then, may be estimated as 34.4

<sup>38</sup>Walther League Messenger, XXX, No. 4, p. 120, November, 1921.

<sup>39</sup>Adapted from *Lutheran World Almanac*, 1924-1926, summary table, p. 218; and *ibid.*, geographical ministerial directory, pp. 141-180.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

per cent urban; 7.2 per cent intermediate (towns of 2,500-5,000 population); and 58.4 per cent rural.<sup>40</sup>

The Walther League in 1927 numbered 1,178 senior and 348 junior young people's societies with an approximate total membership of fifty thousand. Of the congregations with league chapters about fifty-six per cent are situated in the city; seven per cent in towns of 2,500 to 5,000 population; and thirty-seven per cent in places of less than 2,500 or in the open country. Of the estimated 2,363 rural churches in the Synodical Conference in 1925, eighteen per cent had Walther League chapters.<sup>41</sup>

### *Movement Manifestly Blessed*

From a handful of devoted members and leaders assembled in Buffalo thirty-five years ago, the Walther League has grown until today it numbers more than 1,500 senior and junior societies thruout the United States and Canada. It is a laymen's movement designed, as its constitution professes:

- "1. To help, thru the societies, in keeping the young people with the Church.
- "2. To help in furthering Christian love and fellowship in and among the various societies and establishing a closer outward union between them.
- "3. To help encourage the young people to take active part, individually and collectively, in every branch of the work of the congregation and the Church at large.
- "4. To help encourage them to support charitable endeavors within the Lutheran Church.
- "5. To help encourage the systematic study of the Bible.
- "6. To help organize and maintain societies.
- "7. To establish a hospice system for the welfare of fellow Lutherans who are away from home.
- "8. To unite all the young people's societies within the Synodical Conference into one body.
- "9. To issue a periodical and pamphlets in the interest of young people's work.
- "10. To provide for the societies material for religious, educational, and social activities."<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 141-180.

<sup>41</sup>Accepted from *ibid.*, pp. 141-180, and official directory, Walther League.

<sup>42</sup>*Constitution*, Walther League.

## CHAPTER V

### THE LUTHER LEAGUE OF AMERICA OF THE UNITED LUTHERAN CHURCH

#### EARLY INDICATIONS

The earliest harbinger of a Young People's Movement in that part of the Lutheran body which today constitutes the United Lutheran Church in America appeared in 1875, preceding the rise of the Christian Endeavor by six years.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. J. M. Reimensnyder, then pastor of the Lewistown, Pennsylvania, Lutheran Church, founded the Young People's Movement in the United Lutheran Church. His great concern for the welfare of the young people prompted him to hold a series of meetings in their behalf. In January, 1875, seventy-five young people joined his congregation, and Dr. Reimensnyder, sensing the need of a common bond, took advantage of the occasion and organized a "Young People's Religious Society." Exercises were devotional, literary, and social.

Publicity in the *Lutheran Observer* led this pioneer to Philadelphia, New York City, Harrisburg, and elsewhere in the same year, to explain the purpose of the organization and the program and methods followed.

#### *Found First Federation*

Pennsylvania and in New York. In 1889 he organized the "Luther Alliance of the Susquehanna Conference and Synod"—the first permanent synodical federation of young people's societies within the American Lutheran Church.

This successful beginning encouraged the founder to establish similar societies in eastern

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. pp. 139 and 141.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

Later when the Pennsylvania state association of Luther Leagues was established in 1894, the Luther Alliance was merged with this body. Active up to the time when it united with the larger group, Dr. Reimensnyder's Alliance properly lays claim to high rank among the first young people's federations in Christian churches in their endeavor to make the movement successful in its sphere and to establish it on a sound basis.

As regards the rise of this movement, Dr. Reimensnyder declared in 1921:

"The Young People's Movement had its origin and rise in several great principles:

"1. Christianity is active. It is not merely an internal thought or faith, but it has an outward, external fruit in life and activity.

"2. Christianity is personal and individual.

"3. Youth is the growing and the forming period.

"4. The best protection from sin is employment in good and education in the right.

"5. There is a great need of applying systematic ideas to religious culture.

"6. The Church was profoundly impressed with the fact that there was a weakness in our culture somewhere. Our youth were not growing up in the Church as they should. Too many years were lost.

"7. When our young people were confirmed and had reached the period of personal responsibility in the church, they had nothing to engage their faithful activities. They inclined to fall back, become indifferent, or remain inactive—a state in which they gradually became fixed and, in after years, could not be awakened to a life of active service in the Church."<sup>2</sup>

Outside of this specific Luther Alliance many young people's guilds existed in congregations of the General Synod, the General Council, and the United Synod of the South. Not a few of these societies had affiliated with the interdenominational Christian Endeavor, prior to the advent of the national Luther League movement in 1895.

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<sup>2</sup>*Luther League Review*, XXXIII, No. 11, p. 9, February, 1921.

## THE LUTHER LEAGUE OF AMERICA

### BEGINNINGS OF THE LUTHER LEAGUE OF AMERICA

New York City became the focus of much youth-awakening in the late eighties. Dr. W. C. Stoever, prominent layman of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in tracing the early years at the 1908 convention of the Luther League at Chicago, stated that

"the members of the 'Young Men's Union' (Jungmänner-Verein) of St. Peter's German Evangelical Lutheran Church (at 474 Lexington Avenue, Dr. E. F. Moldenhake, pastor) appointed 'a committee to enter into negotiations with the other societies of Lutheran churches in that city, with the idea of forming an organization by which the various Lutheran young people's societies of New York City could be brought together and work harmoniously and unitedly for the upbuilding of the Lutheran Church.'

"At that time there were in New York City twenty-one Lutheran congregations. These were visited in order, and in February, 1888, a meeting was held in St. John's Church (at 81 Christopher Street, Dr. A. C. Wedekind, pastor), at which six societies were represented—St. Peter's, St. John's, St. Luke's, St. James', Epiphany, and St. Mark's. The formation of a society was recommended. On April 19, 1888, organization was effected and the body was called the 'Central Association of Lutheran Young People's Associations of the City of New York.' Officers were elected, and a committee was appointed to draft a constitution and by-laws. These were accepted by each society before adoption by the central society."<sup>3</sup>

#### *Aim Is Welfare of Church*

The Central Association of New York City, according to its constitution, sought "first, to

centralize the endeavors of the various young people's Lutheran societies in New York City for the purpose of strengthening and furthering the growth of the Lutheran Church; secondly, to enhance the intellectual improvement of its members; and thirdly, to promote a spirit of friendly intercourse among them."<sup>4</sup> The *Luther League Review* also was launched as house organ in 1888. With

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, XXI, No. 9, p. 9, September, 1908.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 9.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

its support, semiannual gatherings of the central society prompted other guilds to form and join. Eventually the association became the "Luther League of New York City."

The *Lutheran Herald*, in reviewing the beginnings of the Luther League movement and in encouraging federation of young people's guilds in the Iowa Synod, observed in 1910 that the "Young Men's Union of St. Peter's Church" in New York City had "resolved first to visit a society connected with a church of synodical affiliations different from its own, in order to avoid the appearance of a synodical movement. The committee was very successful in its work. . . . In November, 1889, an important and far-reaching resolution was adopted: viz., to appoint a committee on the extension of work."<sup>5</sup>

This committee was delegated:

"1. To ascertain, by correspondence, the number of young people's societies in New York State, to explain the object, and to suggest the formation of central associations when possible.

"2. To aid in the formation of local societies where none are in existence.

"3. To urge the formation of state organizations when a sufficient number of central associations have been formed.

"4. To urge the formation of a central organization in one of the largest cities of each state and territory, which shall then carry on the work of state organization.

"5. To keep in view the organization of a national federation."<sup>6</sup>

### *Seek to Spread Movement*

Success attended the committee's work. With the auspicious start made by the first Central

Association of New York City, church and lay leaders looked forward to the establishment of similar ventures elsewhere. Having come together "in general meetings for the purpose of facilitating education in religious and church history, as well as in practical church matters,"<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup>*Lutheran Herald*, II, No. 6, p. 95, June, 1910.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>7</sup>Luther League literature.

## THE LUTHER LEAGUE OF AMERICA

men now bent their efforts toward the spread of the movement throughout New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, and into the central and western states.

The first central association in Pennsylvania was formed in May, 1891, comprising fifteen young people's guilds and one thousand members in Lycoming and adjoining counties. It absorbed Dr. Reimensnyder's Luther Alliance of the Susquehanna Conference and Synod.

Centralization of societies went on apace. In June, 1890, a central organization of local guilds in four counties was effected at Rhinebeck, New York. A "preliminary committee" assembled at Albany on February 22, 1893, which "after prolonged discussion and not without a few misgivings issued a call for the first state convention of Lutheran young people."<sup>8</sup> On May 30, 1893, six district associations, representing about eighty individual societies, combined at Utica to form the "New York State Luther League." The following by a week the first national convention of Walther League societies at Buffalo, New York,<sup>9</sup> the New York State Luther League was the first *state* federation of Lutheran young people's societies in the country.

On this occasion the name "Luther League" was first adopted as the official title of a young people's union. Yet to avoid appearing exclusive, the New York body welcomed Lutheran societies bearing other names as well.

### *Other States Follow*

Other states and districts followed New York's lead. On June 25, 1894, ten district

leagues embracing ninety guilds organized the "Luther League of Pennsylvania" at Harrisburg. Kansas followed in October, 1894, when a state league was formed at Atchison. Chicago entertained the first gathering of an Illinois league on June 4, 1895, and the "Luther League of New Jersey" was established at Asbury Park, September 2, 1895. Ohio, Indiana-Kentucky, North

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup>*Cf. supra*, p. 22.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

Carolina, Iowa, and Wisconsin state Luther Leagues organized and joined the national league in 1896.

The Luther League of New York offered an open door to all Lutheran young people, claiming to be "as broad as the Lutheran Church itself." Its touchstone of membership was that the society must be connected with a congregation accepting the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as its norm of faith and conduct.

Before the rise of a national movement, it is clear, district and state leagues existed. Leaders, however, soon felt the need for stronger organic union, if they were to accomplish common ends. "Thru correspondence," asserts Dr. M. J. Bieber, of Minneapolis, Minnesota, "it was decided to call state, central, and local leagues, as well as individuals, together for the purpose of considering the organization of a national league."<sup>10</sup>

### *Organize at Pittsburgh in 1895*

The "Luther League of America" was established on October 31, 1895, in the First Lutheran

Church of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. For this convention a call had been issued by committees representing the state Luther Leagues of New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Kansas. This call urged "the attendance of members of Lutheran societies of whatever name and however synodically related, who would sustain the endeavor of a national Luther League to quicken, by churchly methods, especially among the youth, a clearer consciousness of Christian faith, and to promote among them a practical Christian life."<sup>11</sup>

No less than 381 delegates, representing 6,000 members in twenty states and the District of Columbia, gathered at this first general convention in order to put on a firm foundation nationally the work begun by New York and Pennsylvania state leagues a few years before.

The meeting proved of far-reaching significance in the development of a large part of the American Lutheran

<sup>10</sup>Personal correspondence.

<sup>11</sup>Luther League literature.

## THE LUTHER LEAGUE OF AMERICA

Church—that part which in 1918 became the United Lutheran Church in America. Prominent among those who helped to make the start auspicious were Dr. H. L. Baugher, of Pennsylvania College at Gettysburg; Dr. W. C. Stoever, of Philadelphia; and Dr. E. F. Moldehnke, of New York City, then president of the General Council; Honorable W. H. Staake, of Philadelphia; and Messrs. Frank A. Hartranft and Frederic T. Huber. Dr. George Geisinger, pastor of the First Lutheran Church of Pittsburgh, spoke the word of welcome.

### *Stress Loyalty to Church*

“Loyalty” was the convention theme. Dr. Bieber says of this event:

“It was in the First Church that leading ministers and laymen and women in the then General Council and General Synod and in some other general Lutheran bodies met. For two days and evenings they wrestled with one of the most important problems facing the Lutheran Church—the organization of the young people. . . .

“The matter of choosing a name was a perplexing question, as well as motto and constitution. It was finally decided that the young people’s organization should be called the ‘Luther League of America.’

“The motto adopted was ‘Of the Church, by the Church, for the Church.’ The emblem selected was Luther’s coat of arms with these colors: black, red, white, blue, and gold. . . . It was also decided to hold biennial conventions during the even years, and to meet in 1896 at Chicago.”<sup>12</sup>

Mr. E. F. Eilert, outstanding lay leader of the movement, especially in New York City, was elected first president of the Luther League at the historic Pittsburgh convention. Later he became editor of the *Luther League Review*. This publication, which had served as house organ for the New York City Central Association since its organization in 1888, now was made the official organ for the new national body.

Other officers elected at the first national meeting were:

Mr. M. C. Olson, Chicago, Illinois, general secretary;

<sup>12</sup>Personal correspondence.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

Mr. Cornelius Eckhardt, Washington, D. C., recording secretary;

Dr. W. C. Stoever, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, treasurer;

Miss Katharine Meister, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, assistant recording secretary.

The executive committee, in addition to the president, general secretary, and treasurer, was made up of the following members: Pastor S. G. Weiskotten, Brooklyn, New York; Pastor H. F. Schelle, Staunton, Virginia; Mr. G. M. Jones, Reading, Pennsylvania; Dr. J. F. Trexler, Lancaster, Pennsylvania; Pastor W. K. Frick, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Mr. Leander Trautman, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Pastor J. L. Murphy, Rock Island, Illinois; Dr. L. M. Kuhns, Omaha, Nebraska; and Mr. F. A. Hartranft, Philadelphia.

### THE PERIOD OF EXPANSION

The first national gathering at Pittsburgh proved a landmark in the advance of the Luther League of America and of its member societies. Yet the movement was not entirely free from the clerical scrutiny and doubt to which all Lutheran young people's unions have been subjected. Many feared that the league might degenerate into an exclusively social organization, a force not in harmony with the Church. Others predicted lack of conservatism among the young people and felt that these might gain too much power.

These misgivings, erstwhile hindrance to league progress, proved groundless. Later history dispels once widespread fears of untoward tendencies. While, truly enough, the Luther League from the start strove to gather all young people's societies in the Lutheran Church into a common fold and discouraged attempts to form synodical unions; and while the league recognized no synodical divisions and itself represented no specific Lutheran church body; yet the greater part of the guilds affiliating with the movement belonged to congregations in the General Synod and the General Council, and the remainder properly embraced many young people's socie-

## THE LUTHER LEAGUE OF AMERICA

ties which could claim no synodical league.<sup>13</sup> Besides, the Luther League of America later was destined to become an appreciable factor in merging these bodies with the United Synod of the South to form the United Lutheran Church in America, organized at New York City in October, 1918.<sup>14</sup>

A primary aim of the Luther League in its early years, as today, was to enhance the spirit of loyalty to the Church, or, as Mr. M. A. Munson, of Evanston, Illinois, stated in his address to the 1904 convention at Buffalo, New York, "to secure individual activity and to increase the zeal and ability of the lay worker."<sup>15</sup> Another object was "to provide acquaintanceship, friendship, and co-operation among the younger people of the whole Lutheran Church."<sup>16</sup>

### *Hold Biennial Conventions*

The Luther League was destined to progress. National conventions were held every two years. The second gathering took place at Chicago in 1896. The following convention was held at New York City in 1898, in connection with the tenth anniversary of the organization of the first central association of young people's societies.

Cincinnati, Ohio, entertained the 1900 meeting, and two years later St. Paul, Minnesota, housed the convention. At the 1904 gathering at Buffalo, Canadian leagues were represented for the first time. In 1906 the convention met at Canton, Ohio, and in 1908 at Chicago. In this year the "Canada Luther League" was admitted to district membership.<sup>17</sup> The "Luther League of Porto Rico," organized on March 1, 1907, also was received into the national fold at the 1908 convention. This act made the league international in scope.

<sup>13</sup>There were many homeless young people's societies in other synods.  
<sup>14</sup>*Cf. infra*, p. 59.

<sup>15</sup>*Luther League Review*, XVII, No. 9, p. 21, September, 1904.

<sup>16</sup>*Of the Church, By the Church, For the Church.*

<sup>17</sup>The Canada Luther League had been formed previously at Galt, Ontario, on April 23, 1908, by more than 400 delegates, guests, and pastors from fourteen communities in the Dominion.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

The fifteenth anniversary of the national league organization was celebrated at Pittsburgh, the birthplace, in connection with the 1910 gathering. Albany, New York, housed the 1912 meeting, and Baltimore, Maryland, the 1914 convention. After the Baltimore meeting the league representatives visited Washington in a body and were received by President Wilson.

The 1916 gathering took place at Toledo, Ohio; the 1918 convention again at Buffalo; 1920 at Fort Wayne, Indiana; 1922 at York, Pennsylvania; 1925 at Milwaukee; and 1927 at Salisbury, North Carolina.

### *Membership Approaches Thousand Guilds*

At the 1908 convention at Chicago, league records showed that the membership consisted of fifteen organized state leagues, fifty-three districts, and 836 local senior societies comprising more than 42,000 individuals. There also were 136 junior societies with 6,307 members which brought the total to 972 societies and 48,659 members.

### *Stress Spirit of Consecration*

The general tone of national and state conventions, as evidenced in the *Luther League Review*, has always manifested a spirit of devotion and consecration to task. The late Pastor C. Armand Miller, of New York City, speaking at the Luther Day celebration at New York City in December, 1907, said:

"Our great problem is to develop lay activity in the Church. The Luther League must first of all be an energizing force to the congregation with which it is connected. It must find the way to be the pastor's assistant, to aid in carrying out the work that needs to be done in its own environment.

"The Luther League must raise the standard of loyalty to pastor and Church. In this work it must look first to an object emphasized at the time of organization: viz., to keep the newly confirmed with the Church by its provision of friendly fellowship, by surrounding those who have just entered into the full communion of the Church with church-loving associations, and by seeking to make

## THE LUTHER LEAGUE OF AMERICA

them feel at home, find their friends among the young people of the Church, and discover their interest in the various phases of the Church's work."<sup>18</sup>

Pastor Miller also mentioned "a more difficult task" which confronted the league:

"There is much to do in seeking out those who have become indifferent, those who are forgetting or have forgotten their confirmation vows, and those who are negligent of Christian duty. The Luther League must occupy itself with the problem of setting its members to work, and of discovering and rendering active the latent powers of the congregation. . . . Among the primary objects of each league this ideal should stand clear—to develop in league members a sense of sacred responsibility to attend church services, and to use every influence to induce others to attend."<sup>19</sup>

### *Counts on League Influence*

J. D. Haupt, of St. Paul, called attention to the mission of a young people's organization and to the opportunities for service in the league:

"Unfortunately confirmation frequently is graduation not into the Church, but out of it. This brings disappointment and pain to the faithful pastor. But with his multitude of duties it seems impossible for him to give to the members of each succeeding class confirmed, that personal attention necessary to insure their further development in piety.

"Here is the field for the properly organized and conducted and the inspired Luther League. The congregation without it lacks one of the most potent factors for the preservation of the Church. The young, newly confirmed members of the Church need just such exercises as are afforded by the wise and faithful use of the literature provided by the Luther League."<sup>20</sup>

Much of the success of the Luther League movement in the United Lutheran Church is due to the efforts of Pastor Luther M. Kuhns, D. D., of Omaha, who was

<sup>18</sup>*Luther League Review*, XXI, No. 1, pp. 13 and 14, January, 1908.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, XVII, No. 9, p. 18, September, 1904.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

called to the office of general secretary on February 1, 1903, and who devoted much of his time to the advance of the Young People's Movement.

"The stability of young people's work," declared Dr. Kuhns in 1905, "depends upon its being built into the Church."<sup>21</sup> And so it is that the Luther League has always endeavored to serve the Church. At an early time it helped to solve the language problem by shifting gradually from German to English.

### *Favors Student Missions*

In its thirty-second convention at Minneapolis in September, 1909, the General Council went on record as favoring the establishment of missions at the large educational centers for work especially among students from Lutheran families. Its charge at Madison, Wisconsin, already was flourishing, Pastor H. R. Gold having met with much success among Lutheran students attending the University of Wisconsin. Ever since, the league also has endeavored to establish local societies at educational centers.

Early after 1900 a literature committee was created. Its duty was to provide for a literature section in the official organ. Luther League topics, including plans of lessons for guilds to follow in their educational and missionary aims, featured this section. The present extensive topic system of the league is a memorial to the labors of Dr. Kuhns. First introduced into Pennsylvania Luther League activities in 1894, this system was adopted by the national league in 1896. A reading course soon followed.

### *Upholds Education*

The Luther League early insisted upon education as a cardinal interest. Pastor L. F. Gruber, of St. Paul,<sup>22</sup> writing on "The Importance of a

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, XVIII, No. 5, p. 14, May, 1905.

<sup>22</sup>Now president of Chicago Lutheran Seminary at Maywood, Illinois.

THE LUTHER LEAGUE OF AMERICA

Proper Lutheran Consciousness and the League's Value in Developing It," declared in 1910:

"Recognizing the supreme importance of truth and doctrine, it devolves upon our Church ever to be active in the education of her people in that truth and doctrine. . . . It may safely be said that, outside the confirmation class, no agency is more instrumental in bringing about this blessed result than the Luther League, with its topic system, which covers a wide variety of historical, doctrinal, missionary, and practical subjects. With the well-selected and splendid reading courses, our leagues have indispensable, almost unparalleled instruments and material for the proper development of a correct Lutheran consciousness.

"Thus are furnished both matter and method for the development of our young people into true, devoted, loyal, evangelical Lutheran Christians. Thus they will be enabled to give an intelligent reason for the faith, as well as the hope, that is in them, and to become enthusiastic defenders of the matchless confession with its spiritual fruitage that is theirs. And when all her membership shall have awakened to full consciousness of their Church's unadulterated and inimitable faith, her glorious past and her possible future, that Church will stand forth as a force hitherto apparently but half awake, and as a great missionary power for the gospelizing and uplifting of the nations."<sup>23</sup>

*Establishes Movement  
in Orient*

In the fall of 1908 General Secretary Kuhns left for the Orient in the interest of Luther League missionary enterprises. He visited the mission stations of his church in China, Japan, India, and Korea. In some of these he organized league chapters.

The Luther League in 1908 helped to make possible the work of inner missions in the church by supplying the workers. Young people subscribed to missionary enterprises of the first water by volunteering their services in settlement houses, hospitals, homes, prisons, and seamen's missions.

Since 1909 the league has fostered deaconess work (sick welfare) and has urged its adoption by young

<sup>23</sup>*Luther League Review*, XXIII, No. 2, p. 11, February, 1910.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

women. In its educational program it has dwelt on religious subjects. Calling the Luther League a "layman's university," Pastor William Eckert, of Racine, Wisconsin, in 1909 spoke of the organization as "a training school for voluntary workers," offering "graduate courses in Christianity."<sup>24</sup>

### PRESENT PROPORTIONS

One of the most important steps taken by the Luther League in recent years has been demonstrated in the impetus given to the junior and intermediate phases of league work. The junior endeavor was introduced in 1906. At the 1908 convention at Chicago the principle of a junior auxiliary league was explained. Dr. Stoever here asserted:

"The formation of junior leagues affords the avenue by which the young Lutheran should be led into the senior league. The method of growth should be in control of the senior division, and the very best material among the seniors should have charge of the junior work, so that the proper foundation may be laid, and the desire be formed to enter the senior work at the earliest opportunity. In all this preparation we must not lose sight of the fact that we are training the young people for work in the Church, and that the ultimate aim of all our striving is so to equip ourselves that we can intelligently carry on the Master's work. To carry out this aim needs practice and study, praying and working."<sup>25</sup>

Interest in junior work grew apace, and by 1918 the league numbered 141 junior societies. It was intended early to make the junior branch the league preparatory to an intermediate, and subsequently, the senior league, and to welcome all children under the age of twelve.

#### *Junior Organization Without Parallel*

In this respect the junior Luther League differs essentially from the same division in other Lutheran young people's unions. Juniors customarily

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, XXII, No. 10, p. 15, October, 1909.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, XXI, No. 9, p. 11, September, 1908.

## THE LUTHER LEAGUE OF AMERICA

are counted from the time of confirmation until their sixteenth or eighteenth birthday. In the Luther League the intermediate league corresponds to this division, taking in boys and girls between the ages of twelve and sixteen, while the junior department embraces boys and girls eight to twelve years old.

The intermediate department, established in 1920, was purposed to prepare younger leaguers for the fourfold life—spiritual, social, physical, and educational. For devotions, the *Intermediate Topics* now are used; for education, the intermediate reading courses, with books on studies in missions, church history, stewardship, Bible, and church heroes. For church and league work, the intermediate merit system is employed, with a plan of credits and recognition for individual achievement.

Favorable comment attended the adoption of this scheme. Pastor A. T. Michler, of Philadelphia, said in 1920:

"The intermediate league seeks to provide a normal, healthy, but churchly means to guide and direct the natural interests of our boys and girls of this growing period along a positive and practical Christian life within their own church. Its distinctive purpose is religion and education. This, together with a nice provision for meeting the natural recreative desires of our boys and girls, peculiar to each sex, is the fundamental idea underlying the intermediate league. The form of organization therefore is twofold—one for the boys and one for the girls."<sup>26</sup>

### *Study Practical Church Work*

The junior department of the Luther League was intended to give expression to the idealism

of younger boys and girls thru the study of missionary topics, humane work, and other subjects. From its inception it has trained in matters spiritual, educational, and social. Service is its aim. Its motto may be summed up in the phrase, "Live not for yourself, but for others." One object is to train children to perform deeds of kind-

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<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, XXXIII, No. 3, p. 5, June, 1920.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

ness for the Church, for other people, and for foreign missions.

The 1920 convention at Fort Wayne solicited particular attention to the welfare of the younger leaguers. In that year the official organ devoted a special issue to the pursuit of junior work. Pleading for a strong junior league, Mr. Harry Hodges, of Philadelphia, general secretary of the Luther League from 1916 to 1926, commented editorially:

"The Church needs the children. The church family cannot be what it should be without the children any more than a home that has no children can be all that a happy home might be. The Church needs to feel its responsibility to the children, and it needs the help and inspiration that the work of training the children brings. It needs, too, the service that the children can give. For there are many bits of Christian work that the children can do, and the Church that gives no opportunity for the service that the children can render has failed of its highest mission.

"The children, too, need and should expect the help that the Church can give. Christian parents should of course feel the greatest responsibility for their own children, and nothing can take the place of home training in the religious life as well as in everyday living and thinking. . . .

"There is a large work that the Church can and should do for the children: for those even who have Christian training at home, and much more for those who seem to have no one to care for their souls. The children have a right to expect that the Church of Christ shall care for them and lead them into right paths. This the Church is trying to do thru her Bible schools, catechetical classes, and junior societies; taking them in and guiding and teaching and training them."<sup>27</sup>

### *Establish Junior Secretaryship*

fare of the juniors. It housed a junior convention and appointed Miss Brenda L. Mehlhouse, of Norristown, Pennsylvania, junior secretary. A junior conference also was held to determine plans and methods and to pro-

The 1922 convention at York, Pennsylvania, proved epochal in its endeavors to enhance the wel-

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<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, XXXIII, No. 2, p. 16, May, 1920.

## THE LUTHER LEAGUE OF AMERICA

vide material for work among the young folk. This conference was led by Miss Mehlhouse, who in April, 1924, also was appointed temporary intermediate secretary.

In 1925, 204 junior societies raised an objective fund of \$318 for distribution among the three departments of the league—education, missions, and life service. Prompted by encouragement from the *Junior Outlook*, official organ for the department, the juniors in 1925 also helped support a Spaniard in training for service in the Church.

Junior institutes, intended for the training of league workers and featured by informal conferences and discussions on junior work, have been held in several sections since 1925. Most of the synodical and district Luther Leagues now appoint junior secretaries in pursuit of this important phase of league work.

### *Intermediate Work Gains Impetus*

The York convention provided for the enlargement of intermediate work as well. A conference led by Pastor C. M. Teufel, of Newport News, Virginia, chairman of the committee on intermediate work,

discussed the problems and possibilities of work among the boys and girls of teens age. Three years later Pastor Teufel was able to tell the Milwaukee convention that "a greatly increased interest" had been "awakened in the work among the boys and girls just younger than the youth of senior age."<sup>28</sup>

The intermediate department in 1924 and 1925 launched a campaign to register all intermediate young people's societies in the United Lutheran Church. It succeeded in enrolling approximately two-thirds of the number.

In February, 1925, the league organization created a full-time intermediate secretaryship. This department is the only agency in the United Lutheran Church with an adequate program for the teens age, when it is felt that the Lutheran Church sustains its greatest losses.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, XXXVII, No. 18, p. 8, Supplement, September, 1925.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

Pastor R. J. Wolf, of Abilene, Kansas, as full-time intermediate league secretary has also been placed in charge of boys' work for the United Lutheran Church.

### *Coöperate with Church Boards*

The United Lutheran Church's committee on associations of young people coöperates with the Luther League of America. In its 1924 convention at Chicago the church approved a joint scheme of the Luther League, the "Women's Missionary Society," and the parish and school board, to coördinate the work among children. According to the decision reached, the Women's Missionary Society is at liberty to work among girls and young women of any age, while the league is given power to continue its mission among its junior, intermediate, and senior departments and to train its members in accordance with the constitutions of its several departments. In 1925 the committee on boys' work in the United Lutheran Church turned over its field to the league's intermediate department. On January 1, 1926, the junior program of the league was brought into alignment with the "Light Brigade" of the church.

### *Become Official Young People's Organization*

A significant forward step toward shaping the destiny of the Luther League of America was taken at the 1920 gathering held at Fort Wayne, on the occasion of the league's twenty-fifth anniversary celebration. The body had been intersynodical in scope, membership, and aim, and at the time of organization had entertained the hope of being instrumental in bringing about an united American Lutheran Church. Yet in 1920 records showed that ninety-five per cent of its member societies were linked with congregations of the United Lutheran Church in America.

When the merger of the General Synod, General Council, and United Synod of the South was completed at

## THE LUTHER LEAGUE OF AMERICA

New York City in October, 1918,<sup>29</sup> a constitutional clause was passed, calling for a young people's league as part of the church economy. This act proved a powerful incentive for the Luther League of America to become the official young people's alliance of that body. Leaders declare that, as a matter of fact, the league had been the most influential factor in effecting the synodical union. Urged by special invitation from the church, the Fort Wayne convention of the league passed a resolution of acceptance.

The adoption of the Luther League by the United Lutheran Church as official young people's federation was effected when the latter body convened at Washington, October 5, 1920, and accepted the league's resolution. With this assurance the league now could pursue its work wholeheartedly among all congregations of this church.

In 1918 the Luther League numbered 40,732 individual members in 818 senior and 141 junior guilds. By 1920 this figure dropped to 28,747 members in 658 senior, fifteen intermediate, and 121 junior chapters. This decrease in membership is ascribed to the withdrawal of the Canadian district to reorganize separately; the presence of synodical young people's leagues within other Lutheran bodies; the temporary withdrawal of the California district league; and the weeding out of societies neglectful of their obligations to the national league.

### *York Meeting Proves Epochal*

Several important and far-reaching innovations were introduced at the 1922 convention of the Luther League at York. Membership now included 29,377 individuals in 674 senior, forty-six intermediate, and 148 junior societies.

<sup>29</sup>When the Luther League of America was recognized as the official young people's organization of the United Lutheran Church, the latter body already embraced a "Women's Missionary Society," which concerned itself in part with the problem of preparing young women for service in the church. A "Lutheran Brotherhood" also has been part of the U. L. C. organization. Young men in large numbers are members of this brotherhood.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

Extension work was placed on a new basis. A new, threefold objective was to bring about "a development and reconstruction in the plans and policies of the league."<sup>30</sup> Education, mission, and life service departments were created, largely in consequence of adoption of the league by the United Lutheran Church,<sup>31</sup> and resolutions were passed to provide for the appointment of full-time secretaries for such departments. The North Carolina state league was admitted to membership, as were also the "Missionary Federations" of North and South Carolina, of Southwest Virginia, and of the Holston Synod. The constitution was amended to include membership requirements of the church under control of which the league had placed itself.

The York gathering strongly encouraged the educational endeavor. A complete miscellany of exhibits of work done by junior and senior societies in state competition elicited much praise.

Within recent years, interest has centered around endeavors missionary as well as educational. Many members have entered the church's foreign mission service, supported by leaguers at home. Besides, more than two thousand young people have pledged definite service to the Church.

### *Pledge to Endow College Building*

Significant forward strides in all departments were evidenced at the 1925 convention at Milwaukee.

Several state leagues had been supporting missionary enterprises in the Orient. The national league now accepted as its first great missionary objective the church's invitation to erect Luther League Hall, the ad-

<sup>30</sup>Personal correspondence.

<sup>31</sup>Educational and inspirational features had marked the league's general program since its beginning in 1895. Now the league could turn to the more specific missionary problems of the church it served.

## THE LUTHER LEAGUE OF AMERICA

ministration building of Andhra Christian College in India. The convention pledged completion of this task within two years and declared this the outstanding missionary aim of the national organization. To advance the new cause Miss May Scherer, dean of Marion College, Marion, Virginia, was commissioned to guide the missionary activities of the league. She pleaded for the appointment of a mission secretary by each state and local league.

### *Bible Study Gaining*

More and more, Bible study is coming to the fore as an educational endeavor, it was reported

at the Milwaukee gathering, and the topics, as outlined in the official organ every month, are increasing in popularity.<sup>32</sup> In 1925, twelve summer conference Bible schools were begun in the United States. Since then, several synodical leagues and, in some cases, individual guilds, have added summer schools to their schedules.

Life service department needs were set forth when Pastor C. A. Portz, of Wheeling, West Virginia, part-time secretary since 1923, pleaded for a life service institute for the training of league leaders.

### *Urge Higher Education*

Resolutions passed by the 1925 gathering included emphasis on higher education at Lutheran institutions; an endeavor to establish a life service institute; and provision for the appointment of a full-time life service secretary.

President Walter Bunker, of Kingston, Pennsylvania, declared in appraising achievement and task, "With the appointment of a junior as well as an intermediate secretary, we have filled a gap in our work. The next work we must undertake more intensively is life service and

<sup>32</sup>The *Luther League Review*, now in its fortieth year, numbers more than 5,000 subscribers. The spirit of sanguine optimism and of devotion to church and league tasks breathes from the pages of this monthly which, like the *Topics Quarterly*, is on a self-sustaining basis.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

missions.”<sup>33</sup> Mr. Bunker reiterated the need of maintaining a full-time secretary for each of these departments and solicited more intensive work on the part of state and synodical leagues, counting it impossible for the general secretary to do more than supervise the work. He also pleaded for a prayerful membership.

Mr. Harry Hodges, of Philadelphia, for ten years general secretary of the Luther League, tendered his resignation at the Milwaukee convention. On January 1, 1926, he was succeeded by Pastor A. J. Traver, of New York City.

With the convention motto, “Christ First,” the 1925 gathering reaffirmed the belief of the league in this theme as the only solution to political, intellectual, social, and religious unrest.

The triennium ending with this convention was counted the period of greatest progress since the league’s beginning. This condition was traced to financial improvement and to the impetus following recognition by the United Lutheran Church.

### *Rejoice in Gains*

The 1927 convention at Salisbury, North Carolina, brought to fruition the league’s principal missionary objective—the raising of \$25,000 for Andhra Christian College. A total of \$31,000, including \$500 each from the intermediate and junior league departments, was presented to the foreign mission board of the United Lutheran Church. The league now pledged the creation of funds for the erection of a religious education building at the church’s mission in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The appointment in 1926 of Mr. Herbert Fischer, of Omaha, Nebraska, as regional league secretary for the Middle West had fulfilled a long-cherished hope; now it was counted a most significant achievement. The 1927 gathering commended to its local guilds the adoption of

<sup>33</sup>*Luther League Review*, XXXVII, No. 18, p. 4, Supplement, September, 1925.

## THE LUTHER LEAGUE OF AMERICA

the junior institute movement, successfully begun in two national institutes at Philadelphia; the promotion of boys' camps and of the Boy Scout movement, sanctioned by the church in session at Richmond, Virginia, early in 1927; and the observance annually of Reformation Sunday as "Life Service Day" thruout the league organization.

The Salisbury convention, by resolution, enjoined "continued prayers and coöperation on the part of the leagues with the Near East Relief, including the observance of International Golden Rule Sunday;" and petitioned the United Lutheran Church "to request the parish and school board to call a free conference of representatives of all educational agencies of the church for the better coördination of the church's educational program.<sup>34</sup>

### *Urge Subscription to Church Paper*

The task of making the young people's organization in some measure responsible for promoting the circulation of the official church weekly was assumed early in 1927, when an appeal was issued for 5,000 volunteers to subscribe annually to *The Lutheran*. It was believed that the plan would benefit the synodical organ thru increasing its income from subscriptions and that it would also help to give the young people a better understanding of the activities and background of their church. Upwards of 3,000 new subscriptions and of 2,000 renewals resulted from this campaign, which was to be repeated annually thereafter.

Other endeavors of recent years include encouragement of attendance at the church's summer training schools for missionary workers, and promotion of reading courses, with a selection of books intended for representative young people's libraries.

The sustaining membership fund, begun in 1922 and netting the league over \$21,000 by 1927, is believed large-

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, XXXIX, No. 9, pp. 15 and 16, September, 1927.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

ly responsible for the sound financial condition of the league. It has helped to provide funds for the employment of the personnel of the national headquarters at Philadelphia and has served to strengthen the new departments of the organization. The national league now is sustained on a yearly apportionment of twenty-five cents per member, and since the beginning of 1926 has received an annual appropriation of \$5,000, increased to \$6,000 in 1927, from the United Lutheran Church in support of administrative work.

*Distribution of Ministers Mainly Urban* The United Lutheran Church in 1925 numbered 1,238,009 baptized members in 3,829 congregations served by 2,706 active ministers in the United States and Canada. One thousand five hundred seventy-five, or 58.2 per cent, of these pastors then resided in cities of more than 5,000 population; 227, or 8.4 per cent, in towns of 2,500 to 5,000 population; and 904, or 33.4 per cent, in places of less than 2,500 or in the open country.<sup>35</sup>

Assuming that, on the average, each city and town pastor serves a single congregation, then there were 1,802 city and town churches. The balance of 2,027 churches must be assigned to the 904 rural ministers. The distribution of congregations, then, may be estimated as 41.1 per cent urban; 5.9 per cent intermediate (2,500-5,000 population); and 52.9 rural.<sup>35</sup>

The Luther League of America in 1927 numbered 964 senior societies with 29,665 members; 143 intermediate chapters with 2,859 members; and 187 junior societies with 5,468 members; or a total membership of nearly 38,000 in 1,294 societies. Of the congregations with league chapters about fifty-eight per cent are situated in the city, nine per cent in towns of 2,500 to 5,000 population, and thirty-three per cent in places of less than

<sup>35</sup> Adapted from *Lutheran World Almanac*, 1924-1926, summary table, p. 218, and *ibid.*, geographical ministerial directory, pp. 141-180.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 141-180.

## THE LUTHER LEAGUE OF AMERICA

2,500 population or in the open country. About sixteen per cent of the estimated 2,027 rural congregations in 1925 embraced one or more young people's societies.<sup>37</sup>

### *Consider Rural Problem*

Rural and recreational phases have received repeated consideration in Luther League ranks.

As regards the opportunities open to young people in their communities, leaguers were reminded editorially in 1921 that "the college play, missionary pageant, tennis tournament, outdoor games, and indoor games of the several seasons are all educative in the highest sense, for they develop character and test it while it grows."<sup>38</sup>

A recreational policy for the rural society, it was declared, might include:

"frequent get-togethers for the young people of the parish for good times thru good fellowship; giving the community a series of clean and cheerful entertainments at the lowest expense, following, as far as possible, known preferences of the people; giving legitimate expression to the dramatic instinct by arranging representatives of people and events worth remembering in connection with the community, the church, and the Kingdom; offering such a choice of outdoor sports that all the young people may have frequent opportunity to play together in the open air, winter and summer; and inviting the young people of the neighborhood to share the hospitality of the members' homes as often as arrangements can be made.

"Let us do all this so that we make real and genuine those pleasures of youth that bring no sorrow with them."

In 1923 the summer camp movement for boys was instituted. In 1926 Camp E. Clarence Miller was opened at Shawnee-on-Delaware, Pennsylvania, with an attendance of 239 boys. Pastor A. C. Carty, of Philadelphia, chairman of the boys' work committee of the Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania, originated the movement a number of years ago in this synod. After conferring with 1,500 boys in 1927, Pastor Carty was able to point

<sup>37</sup>Adapted from *ibid.*, pp. 141-180, and official directory, Luther League of America.

<sup>38</sup>*Luther League Review*, XXXIV, No. 1, pp. 14 and 15, April, 1921.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

out more than thirty who had decided to enter the Lutheran ministry as a result of mass meetings arranged by the committee thruout the ministerium.

### RECAPITULATION

#### *Past and Present Aims Are Alike*

The first great purpose of the founders of the Luther League of America was to advance the Kingdom of God. It is much the same today: viz., "to stimulate Christian activity and to foster the spirit of loyalty to the Church thru education, missions, and life service."<sup>39</sup> The league's objects are: careful organization; education in the histories, doctrines, usages, and needs of the Church; encouragement of social intercourse; and cultivation of a devotional spirit thru meetings for worship and for study of the Word of God. The organization promotes "daily Bible reading, weekly devotionals, reading courses, mission study, vocational guidance classes, self-expression in prayer and witness, personal work, practice in clear thinking, study of the relation of Christ to personal problems, and training in organization principles."<sup>40</sup>

For thirty-three years the Luther League has shaped the aims and directed the efforts of thousands of young people in their spiritual undertakings. It has

"broken down provincial barriers among language and synodical groups; laid the foundations in understanding and fellowship for the United Lutheran Church in America; trained Lutheran youth in parliamentary procedure and church leadership; given Lutheran youth a vision of the whole Church and developed loyalty to the Church; directed the thought of the Lutheran youth to vocational and avocational service in the Church; and organized Lutheran youth to meet parish, community, and world needs. The league has demonstrated the latent power of the youth of the United Lutheran Church by erecting the Administration Building at Andhra Christian College, India; built and promoted a departmentalized program of education

<sup>39</sup>*Constitution, Luther League of America.*

<sup>40</sup>*Making Church History.*

## THE LUTHER LEAGUE OF AMERICA

and training for the age groups in the local congregation; prepared and promoted a specialized literature for youth and workers with youth; and maintained a headquarters at Philadelphia for information and for leadership in meeting youth problems."<sup>41</sup>

### *Justifies League*

#### *Existence*

The declaration of Mr. E. A. Miller, of Philadelphia, in his address to the fifteenth anniversary convention of the league at Pittsburgh in 1910, is as true today as then in justifying the place of the Luther League in the Church:

"The Luther League of America was born not as a matter of convenience, nor in gratification of personal ambitions, but as a necessity. In the first place, the conditions of the time demanded it. Young people's inter-denominational societies had been formed. The utilization of the energy and activity of the young people in the churches having been recognized, and general societies for their organization having been effected, there was need for the Luther League, in order that this new thing in church life might be encouraged and developed in our Lutheran Church amid proper conditions and in a healthy atmosphere.

"But the necessity which gave birth to the Luther League arose also from a hope for the future. The young people must be taught to know the history and doctrines of the Church and to love her for the truth which she teaches. She does not appeal to the senses; neither does she offer social position. Some of her doctrines may be considered 'hard' even as many of the disciples turned away from the Master because of the 'hard saying' which He told them. But our young people must be taught that she holds and teaches the truth and declares like Peter of old, 'To whom shall we go?'"<sup>42</sup>

"The Luther League teaches and instructs the young people, and with them lies the future of the Church."<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup>*Of the Church, By the Church, For the Church*, p. 4.

<sup>42</sup>*John 6, 68.*

<sup>43</sup>*Luther League Review*, XXIII, No. 11, p. 9, November, 1910.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE AUGUSTANA SYNOD

#### LUTHER LEAGUE

Early awakening of a definite youth expression among congregations of the Augustana Synod was observed in 1877. On May 8 a number of young men in the First Lutheran Church of Moline, Illinois, gathered under the leadership of Mr. Peter Colseth, a layman, to consider the feasibility of organizing an assembly of youth. They appointed Mr. Colseth chairman and called their group the "Swedish Lutheran Young Men's Federation of Moline, Illinois" (*Svenska Lutherska Församlingens Ynglinga-Förening*).<sup>1</sup> Mr. Carl A. Swensson, later the founder of Bethany College at Lindsborg, Kansas, and one of the greatest leaders of the Augustana Synod, was chosen secretary.

#### *Begin As Men's Association*

A general call was issued to all men interested in the venture to meet on May 15, 1877. On this day the purpose of the organization was explained. Singing, declamation, and debates on timely topics were among the aims proposed. Thirty-four young men ratified the constitution.

By March, 1882, the question of admitting young women into the guild was broached. After two months of deliberation the society welcomed them. On May 8 the name of the guild was changed from "young men's society" (*Ynglingaförening*) to "young people's society" (*Ungdomsförening*).

Tradition tells that here and there the movement, happily begun in Moline, took root and flourished. Individual societies were organized to keep the confirmed young people with the local congregation. "Young people's association" was a common name.

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<sup>1</sup>*Minnesskrift*, p. 393 ff.

## THE AUGUSTANA SYNOD LUTHER LEAGUE

### *Federate in Nineties*

In the early nineties appeared combinations of local societies, the divisions corresponding to synodical mission districts. Later the movement was to be coextensive with the synod, comprising conferences, districts, and local societies.

The early alignment of congregational Luther Leagues into district leagues led to the hope of marshalling these groups into units paralleling the conferences of the Augustana Synod. Concerted efforts to attain this end were made in May, 1901. Clerical champions presented the young people's cause to the Kansas conference, in annual session at Denver, Colorado, and expressed the hope of leagues and league members that the pastoral conference appoint a committee to formulate plans for a central association of young people's societies.

This hope was realized. Pastor George E. Youngdahl, Colorado Springs, Colorado; Pastor C. A. Engstrand, Topeka, Kansas; and Dr. Frank Nelson and Professor Carl Johns, both of Bethany College at Lindsborg, were commissioned to investigate the field and to report their findings to the conference in its following session at Friends' Home, Kansas.

The matter was temporarily dropped when the committee failed to report at the 1902 conference. However, with revival of interest and with encouragement from league leaders, a second committee, comprising the same members in part, was appointed by the Kansas conference in its meeting at Kansas City, Missouri, in April, 1903. The duty of the new committee was to propose plans for uniting Luther Leagues into a central body.

### *Kansas Conference Leads*

An official call from this committee brought forty delegates, representing eighteen young people's societies, to a gathering in the Swedish Lutheran Church, Topeka, Kansas, October 16 to 18, 1903. On the second day it was resolved to organize the "Kansas

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

Conference Luther League." Dr. Nelson, who was elected president, declared in 1925: "The Kansas conference of the Augustana Synod endorsed the league from the very beginning, and it has given the young people's organization all possible support and encouragement during all these years."<sup>2</sup>

With the organization of the Kansas Conference Luther League on October 17, 1903, the Young People's Movement in the Augustana Synod can properly be said to have been launched in a systematic, purposeful manner. Conferences in other states followed the example of the Kansas group, appointing committees to effect similar federations within their jurisdiction.

*Iowa Follows* The year 1904 marks the beginning of concerted efforts to establish the league in Iowa.

Pastor F. V. Hanson, of Red Oak, Iowa, was elected president of the "Iowa Conference Luther League," organized in the Swedish Lutheran Church at Gowrie on October 10, 1905.

Appointment of a committee by the Nebraska conference of the synod in 1907 led this body to ratify a league constitution a year later. Upon recommendation of the committee a conference Luther League for Nebraska was organized in the Bethlehem Swedish Lutheran Church at Wahoo on November 1, 1909. Fifty-three delegates, representing leagues in the four districts of the conference, elected Dr. J. Ekholm, then of Newman Grove, Nebraska, president.

Conference-wide interest in the Young People's Movement within the Illinois conference began with the appeal of the Paxton district to the 1907 conference at Chicago, Illinois, urging league federation. On September 20, 1908, the "Augustana Luther League of the Illinois Conference" was established in the Saron Swedish Lutheran Church, Chicago, with the approval of eighty-

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<sup>2</sup>*Manual for Luther Leagues*, p. 12.

## THE AUGUSTANA SYNOD LUTHER LEAGUE

one pastors and delegates from about forty individual societies. Pastor A. F. Bergstrom, of Chicago, was chosen leader.

*Synod Approves* By 1908 the Augustana Synod had taken official notice of the Young People's Movement. In session at Chicago this body, which includes virtually all Swedish Lutheran churches in America, sanctioned the movement by adopting resolutions to encourage and expedite the creation of local, district, and conference leagues.

Prompted by this synodical recommendation, a conference Luther League was organized in Minnesota in 1909. Other conferences followed, and by 1927, twelve of the thirteen conferences in the synod were giving place to a conference Luther League.

As early as 1903 the question of synodical federation of all Luther Leagues was broached. Favorable sentiment grew, and by 1905 the need of uniting was clearly brought before the synod in annual meeting at Stanton, Iowa. A committee consisting of Dr. Adolf Hult, Pastor M. Noyd, and Mr. Anders Schön, of Chicago; Dr. C. W. Foss and Pastor C. E. Hoffsten, of Rock Island; and Dr. Nelson, was enjoined to prepare a plan of organization for young people's work on a synod-wide scale. Says Dr. Nelson, now president of Minnesota College at Minneapolis:

### PROPOSE INTEGRATED SYSTEM

"At the meeting of the synod at New Britain, Connecticut, in 1907, the committee presented a complete report. The report recommended first, that Luther Leagues be established in the local congregations; secondly, that the local leagues organize into districts; thirdly, that the district leagues within each conference federate into a synodical Luther League. It was further recommended that the proposed synodical Luther League sustain an organic and official connection with the national Luther League of America."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 15. As a matter of fact, not a few young people's societies in the Augustana Synod had affiliated with the intersynodical Luther

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

This committee advocated the inclusion of programs literary and devotional. A topic system as outlined by the Luther League of America was to be employed. It was also recommended that publicity be accorded to the league aims, and especially to the literary program, in the columns of the *Young Lutheran's Companion*.

With a few changes, the committee report was adopted by the Augustana Synod in June, 1908, at Chicago. By 1910 a league constitution was submitted to the synod, in jubilee session at Rock Island, Illinois, and ratified.

Delegates representing Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Kansas, and Nebraska Conference Luther Leagues finally effected the establishment of the "Augustana Synod Luther League" in the Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Chicago, on December 3, 1910. This act was the first concerted effort to knit all young people's societies into one synodical fabric.

### *Constitution Evinces Religious Concern*

Counting the doctrines of the Bible as expounded in the Unaltered Augsburg Confession its articles of faith, the constitution ratified by the synod and adopted by the young people and their leaders proposed "to secure to the Church among the members of the league deeper love for her doctrines, stronger devotion to her principles, and greater activity for her growth by promoting and encouraging the study of her history, doctrines, and interests; primarily the history and interests of the Augustana Synod."<sup>4</sup>

The constitution further specified that conventions be held every two years at places to be designated by the executive committee. Each conference league was to be entitled to one clerical and one lay delegate for every 500 members or major fraction thereof.

League of America. Among these was a "Swedish Luther League of Rhode Island," a federation which in 1901 had joined the Luther League as a district.

<sup>4</sup>Minutes, p. 200, Fifty-first Annual Convention, Augustana Synod, 1910.

## THE AUGUSTANA SYNOD LUTHER LEAGUE

The following officers were elected at this first convention:

Dr. Frank Nelson, Minneapolis, Minnesota, president;  
Dr. G. A. Dorf, McPherson, Kansas, vice-president;  
Miss Marie Callerstrom, Gowrie, Iowa, secretary;  
Miss Minnie Peterson, Chicago, Illinois, treasurer; and  
Mr. J. S. Helgren, Omaha, Nebraska, statistician.

### *Awake to New Responsibility*

After thirteen years of endeavor, leaders of the movement felt that reorganization was necessary if systematized young people's work was to prosper. Accordingly, delegates from the New York, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Kansas, Nebraska, and Texas Conference Luther Leagues met at the Chicago Lutheran Bible School in February, 1924, to reorganize the synodical Luther League. Pastor Conrad Bergendoff, of Chicago, was elected president. Under the new plan two delegates from each conference league were to meet as a "Synodical Luther League Council of the Augustana Synod of North America" once a year and devise ways to coördinate and develop Luther League work thruout the synod. This council was vested with advisory powers only.

The immediate objects of the 1924 council meeting comprised the revision of the constitution and the preparation and publication of a *Manual for Luther Leagues*. In submitting the new constitution to the synod for sanction, Pastor Bergendoff declared, "As a synodical Luther League council we desire only to promote the real interests of the Kingdom of God among our synod's youth."<sup>5</sup> The synod, in session at the First Lutheran Church, DeKalb, Illinois, in June, 1924, approved the constitution. The *Manual*, replete with helpful suggestions on systematized programs for local societies, carried a brief history of the league movement in the synod as well as a model constitution for local guilds. It was published in 1925.

<sup>5</sup>Minutes, p. 182, Sixty-fifth Annual Convention, Augustana Synod, 1924.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

Among the achievements of the synodical Luther League in the fiscal year 1924 to 1925 was the establishment of a young people's department in the *Lutheran Companion*, official organ for the Augustana Synod. Pastor Joshua Odén, of Chicago, was appointed editor of this department, which now is called the *Augustana Luther Leaguer*. A weekly topic system was instituted. In addition to this editorial departure the league set out to publish, from time to time, helpful tracts on matters of Christian experience and congregational life.

### *Hold Christian Conference*

In coöperation with the "Christian Brotherhood" and the "Augustana Foreign Missionary Society," a student organization at the Augustana College and Theological Seminary at Rock Island, Illinois,<sup>6</sup> the league in February, 1926, fostered a "Second Christian Conference." This meeting, held at Rock Island, was designed especially to develop a Christian consciousness and a spirit of service and fellowship among the youth of the synod. Fifteen hundred young people attended from twenty states. The first conference, held in the same city in 1921, had elicited much praise.

Like its precedent, the 1926 Christian Conference proved an inspirational and devotional meeting of four days. The event is definitely linked with the Young People's Movement, and the league has chosen to make it a quadrennial affair. As such, this event takes the place of the usual yearly or biennial convention of other Lutheran leagues.

The annual institutes of Christian workers correspond to the yearly district conventions of other Lutheran leagues. They are held at some strategic center in each conference Luther League under the direction of its executive committee and draw large numbers of ministers and laymen representing practically every local young people's society. The yearly summer conference camps

<sup>6</sup>*Cf. infra*, pp. 122-123.

## THE AUGUSTANA SYNOD LUTHER LEAGUE

of the Illinois Conference at Long Lake, Illinois, for example, include more than one thousand workers present during the week. Bible study and church problems are the major topics discussed at these institutes.

Districts within each conference league hold meetings from one to four times yearly. Several districts have established lyceum bureaus, listing for the benefit of local guilds suitable speakers with their subject, as well as musical talent. The Tacoma-Mt. Baker, Washington, district and the New York conference instituted such bureaus in 1926.

### *Strength Lies in Sectional Leagues*

The Young People's Movement in the Augustana Synod is known by its conference and district leagues rather than by the synodical Luther League. It is felt that the spread of congregations over the United States is too wide to warrant large national conventions yearly. While the synodical federation yet is weak organically, the conference leagues, and the district leagues within, are strongly supported by the young people.

Support of inner, home, and foreign missions and missionaries, as well as endowment of scholarships for ministerial and missionary candidates at the synodical seminary and at Bible schools, to the extent in some sections of several thousand dollars annually, are outstanding achievements of the conference leagues. "Each section of the country has developed its league much according to its own pattern," said Pastor Bergendoff in his report to the synod assembled in 1925 at St. Paul, Minnesota.<sup>7</sup> The state conferences of the synod, in their annual sessions, also are giving more and more attention to matters touching on young people's work.

That the efforts of the Augustana Luther League Council to unify the work of the conference leagues have not been in vain, is shown in the progress made since 1926. The Augustana Synod in its annual session at Philadel-

<sup>7</sup>Minutes, p. 147, Sixty-sixth Annual Convention, Augustana Synod, 1925.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

phia in that year recognized the council as the official representative of young people's work thruout the synod. A year later at Omaha, Nebraska, the synodical convention empowered the council to elect an executive secretary and appropriated for this purpose \$5,000 from the synodical treasury, with the proviso that the secretary, when appointed, gather material for books on devotional subjects for young people. Such material is now in course of preparation.

### *Council Assumes Many Duties*

Besides bringing the urgent need of corporate league work to the attention of synodical officials and conventions, the council encourages Bible study. It fosters the "Institute" movement and solicits its acceptance by the conference leagues, aiming in this way to reach large numbers of the older young people. It also has sponsored the "One-won-one" fellowship movement, an intrasynodical organization whose members pledge personal work in winning the unchurched. Over three hundred pledges were made by 1927. Under the supervision of the council more than 250 congregational young people's leagues in 1927 took part in a synod-wide campaign to place the *Lutheran Companion* in every home in the synod.

The Augustana Luther League Council publishes tracts on devotional subjects and expects to publish a young people's magazine in emulation of leagues in other synods. Congregational young people's societies are granted synodical membership and representation in the council by charter when they have joined their respective conference leagues. All conferences of the synod except Canada now embrace conference Luther Leagues and are represented in the national council.

The Augustana Synod in 1925 numbered more than 300,000 baptized members in 1,256 congregations served by 721 active pastors in the United States and Canada. Three hundred seventy-one, or 51.5 per cent of these min-

## THE AUGUSTANA SYNOD LUTHER LEAGUE

isters then resided in cities of more than 5,000 population ; 61, or 8.5 per cent, in towns of 2,500 to 5,000 population ; and 289, or 40.1 per cent, in places of less than 2,500 population or in the open country.<sup>8</sup>

Assuming that, on the average, each city and town pastor serves a single congregation, then there were 432 city and town churches. The balance of 824 churches must be assigned to the 289 rural ministers. The distribution of congregations, then, may be estimated as 29.5 per cent urban, 4.9 per cent intermediate (2,500-5,000 population), and 65.6 per cent rural.<sup>9</sup>

The Young People's Movement in the Augustana Synod embraces more than twenty thousand members. Most of the congregations have guilds which are designed primarily to interest and assist the young people in the work of the Church. The majority of these societies conduct systematic Bible study.

<sup>8</sup>Adapted from *Lutheran World Almanac*, 1924-1926, summary table, p. 218, and *ibid.*, geographical ministerial directory, pp. 141-180.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 141-180.

## CHAPTER VII

### YOUNG PEOPLE'S UNIONS IN THE IOWA SYNOD

#### EARLY INDICATIONS

Corporate league work in the Iowa Synod is of comparatively recent origin. Yet a comprehensive view of the Young People's Movement in this body discloses efforts which appeared as early as the seventies. According to Professor Julius Bodensieck, of Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa,<sup>1</sup> separate young men's and young women's societies were organized in several congregations during that decade and the twenty years preceding 1900.

Congregational guilds embracing both young men and women were established soon after 1890, notably at Mendota, Illinois (Dr. F. Richter, pastor), Rock Falls, Illinois (Dr. Michael Reu, pastor), Charles City, Iowa (Pastor E. H. Caselmann), and Dubuque (Pastor H. Luz). In 1896 the Northern district of the synod (then including the territory of the present Northern and Iowa districts) numbered ten young people's societies; the Southern district twelve; the Eastern district four; the Wisconsin district (including Wisconsin and Minnesota) nine; and the Dakota district three such societies.

Separate young men's and young women's societies waned in number as young people's guilds came to the fore. In 1896 there were five young men's and eleven young women's societies. When the Iowa Synod celebrated its golden jubilee in 1904, a count of young people's guilds revealed the following figures: Northern district, twenty societies; Southern, twenty; Eastern, thirteen; Western, one; Wisconsin, thirteen; Dakota, seven; Texas, eight; and Mission district, one. These districts embraced in the aggregate 2,862 individual members. In

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<sup>1</sup>Editor of the *Lutheran Herald*.

## THE WARTBURG LEAGUE

addition there existed three young men's and eight young women's societies.

### *Advance By District Grouping*

The venture to coördinate individual guilds into synodical district organizations proved successful soon after its beginning in 1900. The *Lutheran Herald*, official organ of the Iowa Synod, points to a rise of the movement in the then Northern district thru a "Federation of Lutheran Young People's Associations of Iowa" (Verband Lutherischer Jugendvereine in Iowa), organized at Charles City in 1901.<sup>2</sup> Prominent in this amalgamation were the societies at Charles City (Pastors Caselmann and C. A. Decker, the latter then a vicar); Mason City, Iowa (Pastor J. F. Lorch); Strawberry Point, Iowa (Pastor G. Graf); New Hampton, Iowa (Pastor S. W. Fuchs); and Dubuque (Pastor Luz).

By 1906 the desire to federate had struck root in the then Wisconsin and Southern districts. Active societies at Minneapolis, Minnesota (Pastor H. Hartig), Eau Claire, Wisconsin (Pastor A. F. Augustin), Madison, Wisconsin (Pastor O. J. Wilke), and Sheboygan, Wisconsin (Pastor W. Staehling), promoted the cause. On August 26 the "Eastern Wisconsin Federation" was created at Mayville, Wisconsin. Dr. H. L. Fritschel, of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, was elected president.

On the same day the first convention of the "Illinois Federation" took place at Mendota, Illinois. Its first president was Miss Rosa Schuetz of Mendota. This locality (Pastor Carl Proehl), Peoria, Illinois (Pastor F. B. Bess), Clinton, Iowa (Pastor O. Hartmann), and Earlville, Illinois (Pastor W. H. Kurtz) produced the most active guilds in the Southern district. The Southern district of the synod was the first to sanction young people's work. By offering a form of organization and a

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<sup>2</sup>*Lutheran Herald*, II, No. 7, p. 111, July, 1910.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

constitution for the individual society as well as for the union, this district paved the way for federation.

*Measure Tokens  
Synodical Concern* The clergy of the Iowa Synod early saw the need of systematic work among the church's younger citizenry. An overture from the Wisconsin district prompted the general synod in session at Mendota in 1907 to create a committee on young people's societies. This board, consisting of Pastor Carl Proehl (representing the Southern district), Dr. H. L. Fritschel (Wisconsin district), and Pastor C. G. Prottengeier, then of Dubuque (Northern district), was enjoined to "pay closest attention to the movement, assist in the founding and conducting of societies, and establish contact among the various societies within the synod."<sup>3</sup>

This "Synodical Committee" manifested its interest by sponsoring the formation of several unions of young people's guilds and attending a number of their conventions. It also published articles bearing on young people's work in the *Lutheran Herald*, which in 1910 was made official young people's organ by action of the general synod in session at Waverly, Iowa. Pastor Prottengeier as young people's editor laid much stress on Bible study and indoctrination as cardinal endeavors for the local guild.

In the same year the committee was increased to five members, whose duty it now was to prepare lesson helps for Sunday Schools. By 1910 the several districts in the synod embraced 132 young people's guilds and 4,900 members.

## DEVELOPMENTS

The question of knitting all young people's societies into a synodical fabric early became the important issue. Even in 1908 the Federation of Lutheran Young People's Associations of Iowa voiced its desire to promote

3Minutes, p. 114, Annual Meeting, Iowa Synod, 1907.

## THE WARTBURG LEAGUE

organic union of all societies. Resolutions drawn in 1910 by a special committee of this Iowa federation bespeak a feeling then rife in many quarters:

*"Whereas, one of the great problems confronting the synod today is to insure fidelity on the part of the young people over against the Church, we deem it advisable to encourage the formation of young people's societies in every congregation connected with the Synod of Iowa and Other States.*

### COUNT SEPARATENESS POWERLESS

*"Whereas, it is difficult for any one local league to bring forth effective results for the benefit of the synod and Church at large, we deem it advisable to unite these local societies into various districts in order to stimulate greater activity, to discuss the best methods for presenting the work, and to promote sociability.*

*"Whereas, it is impossible for a district league to accomplish any results for the welfare of all leagues of the synod, without the coöperation of other districts, and as organization is the source of activity, power, and usefulness, we deem it necessary to form a synodical federation of all young people's societies connected with the Synod of Iowa and Other States.*

*"Whereas, there are now existing in the states of Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Iowa well-organized district leagues which would be greatly benefited by a synodical federation:*

*"Be it resolved that we, the members of the committee, coöperate with the officers of the other districts to bring about the formation of a synodical federation of young people's societies connected with the Synod of Iowa and Other States, at the earliest date."*<sup>4</sup>

### *Committee Seeks Golden Mean*

Federation, too, was the problem facing the synodical committee. This board, however, sought to avoid tendencies which might vest too much authority in central organization. From 1910 to 1912 it met repeatedly with representatives of various district young people's leagues in an endeavor to solve the problem. The board also prepared model constitutions for

<sup>4</sup>*Minutes, Federation of Lutheran Young People's Associations of Iowa, 1909.*

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

individual societies and district federations, attended federation meetings with a view to understanding the aims of congregational societies, and encouraged the young people's associations to address themselves to extra-parochial tasks such as the support of indigent students, the purchase of a pipe organ for Wartburg College at Clinton, and the erection of a Luther statue at Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque.

By 1912 circumstances led to the creation of a more comprehensive central body. An "Advisory Board for Young People's Societies of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Iowa and Other States" met in St. John's Church at Dubuque on November 28, 1912. Districts and groups represented here comprised the synodical committee, Dr. Reu, chairman; the "North Iowa District;" the "Eastern Iowa District;" the "German Lutheran League of the Northwest;" the "Illinois" or "Southern District;" and the "Young People's Union (Bund der Jugendvereine) of Eastern Wisconsin."

Officers elected for a biennium were:

Pastor O. J. Wilke, Madison, Wisconsin, president; Mr. Hugo Hartig, Minneapolis, Minnesota, vice-president; and Miss Clara C. Helbig, Dubuque, Iowa, secretary-treasurer.

### *Resolutions Expedite Organization*

The question of synodical federation was still a bone of contention. However, upon encouragement from the synodical committee, resolutions previously sanctioned by all but the "Southeast Wisconsin District" were adopted, calling for general federation of district leagues under the jurisdiction of the advisory board. This board, provided with executive powers and designed to include the synodical committee and three delegates from each district federation, was commissioned to meet biannually and to "do all in its power to promote the cause of young people's societies."<sup>5</sup> The synod, in session at Oshkosh, Wisconsin, approved of this action.

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<sup>5</sup>*Lutheran Herald*, V, No. 1, p. 8, January 15, 1913.

## THE WARTBURG LEAGUE

Other resolutions suggested by the synodical committee and adopted by all the district federations urged:

"1. That every society look upon the local congregation to which it belongs as its first field of activity, rendering such service as lies within its power.

"2. That participation in the work of the Kingdom of God at large also be regarded as coming within the scope of every society and find its expression in the support of special causes of the Church, such support to be rendered under the direction of the proper synodical authorities; for instance, to make provision for scholarships, the management of these to be in the hands of the respective faculty; and to support the causes of home missions, especially the church extension fund, and also the needs of the foreign fields."<sup>6</sup>

### *Effect Federation in 1912*

With this step, federation was assured, and the present Wartburg League dates from this beginning in 1912. Two years later the advisory board met again in St. John's Church at Dubuque. The German Luther League of the Northwest, the Northern Iowa, Eastern Iowa, and "Wartburg (Illinois)" districts, the "Young People's Association of the Northwest," and the "Capital City (Wisconsin) Federation" were represented in the amalgamation. The advisory board now was made the "Synodical Federation of Lutheran Young People's Societies of the Synod of Iowa and Other States."

The 1914 meeting of the advisory board was marked by discussions on practical church questions. Contributions for the proposed Wartburg Seminary at Dubuque; donations to the Clinton, Iowa, pipe-organ fund; ways to improve the local young people's societies; and foreign mission enterprises were considered. It was felt that "the urgent need of help in mission work was one of the chief reasons for forming a synodical federation."<sup>7</sup> This meeting served to strengthen the organization founded in 1912.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup>*Minutes*, Synodical Federation of Lutheran Young People's Societies, 1914.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

### THE PERIOD OF PROGRESS

Dr. Reu, from 1914 to 1921 president of the synodical federation and chairman of the synodical committee until 1923, in 1915 prepared a series of sketches, *The Life of Luther*, for the *Lutheran Herald*. Used widely among the congregational leagues, these sketches appeared in book form in both English and German in 1916. His second series of topics, appearing in the official organ between 1918 and 1920, concerned the distinctive doctrines of the Lutheran Church. From 1920 to 1923 Dr. Reu prepared in book form a third series, *Topics for Young People's Societies*, embracing subjects missionary, biblical, historical, and doctrinal. These topics were designed to "confirm the young people in their faith and enable them to 'give a reason for the hope that is in them'."<sup>8</sup>

Dr. Reu's publications from the beginning took high rank in the Iowa Synod as educational helps in young people's work. His outstanding leadership during the period of stress had won for him the lasting respect of all leaguers; and today his influence is felt in the more permanent phases of the synodical young people's work.

From 1912 to 1921, conventions of the synodical federation were biennial. Districts alone, rather than individual societies, were privileged to send delegates to Dubuque, where the conventions have since been held. The 1916 gathering authorized the creation of a young people's memorial fund for a Luther statue, to be erected at Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque.<sup>9</sup> This convention also viewed the need of establishing the office of executive secretary.

*Stimulate  
Bible Study*

By 1920 the synodical federation numbered eighty-three local chapters with 3,089 members, while the nine district federations thruout the synod em-

<sup>8</sup>Reu, *Topics*, preface; *I. Peter 3, 15.*

<sup>9</sup>Unveiled in 1923.

## THE WARTBURG LEAGUE

braced 245 societies with 9,784 members. Systematic Bible study was the theme of this year's meeting at Dubuque, and all societies were requested to emphasize this aim. In the same year, too, the synodical committee, ever keeping at heart the welfare of youth in the Church, petitioned the synod, in convention at Waverly, Iowa, to regard again the cause of youth and its needs, as well as the Church's responsibility toward its young people in this matter. Resolutions submitted to the synod and adopted by this body at Waverly in 1920 requested "that the federation of young people's societies might meet in convention annually; that every local society be entitled to representation at the convention; that a Sunday School teachers' conference be held in connection with the convention; and that one day of the synodical sessions be devoted to matters pertaining to the young people's societies and their work."<sup>10</sup>

On July 26, 1921, the first convention of the "Sunday School Teachers' Institute" was held in conjunction with the young people's league meeting at Dubuque. The gathering, attended by about one hundred delegates, decided upon annual meetings, and with this step, reorganization of the league took effect.<sup>11</sup> The topics prepared by Dr. Reu were accepted as the official course of study for the local chapters. Extension of the junior movement was warmly solicited. In place of the bilingual standard, English now was used as the official language.

*Elect League*

*Director*

Membership now numbered eight districts, eighty-seven societies, and 3,350 members. To

aid the material growth of the organization, the office of executive secretary was created, to which Pastor C. A. Wiederanders, of LaMoille, Illinois, was appointed.

<sup>10</sup>*Sunday School Teachers' Conference*, Iowa Synod, 1922, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup>The synodical committee, under whose guidance the reorganization of the synodical federation was effected, consisted of Dr. M. Reu, Pastor O. J. Wilke, Pastor C. G. Prottenger, of Charles City, Pastor E. H. Rausch, of Waverly, and Mr. William Stein, of Peoria.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

The young people heretofore had rallied generously to the support of the church fund for home and foreign missions. By 1921 they had contributed \$10,000 toward the pursuit of this important phase of church work. Resolutions passed at this year's meeting urged all the more the support of the synod's mission work.

"The Practical Mission of Our Young People's Societies" was the theme of the 1922 convention, held at Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque. It was made clear that the young people's society, as an arm of the church, should serve that church; that it should quicken the mental and spiritual life of its members; and that it should serve as a training school in church work. A constitution also was adopted.

### *Unveil Luther Monument*

The synodical committee and delegates and visitors from fifty-nine local chapters made up the 1923 meeting at Dubuque. On this occasion the hope of unveiling a Luther statue at Wartburg Seminary was realized. The importance of enlarging the junior phase was reëmphasized. A new name, "Wartburg League," representative of the synod's educational institutions and emblematic of Luther's erstwhile retreat, was adopted. In this way the league chose to indicate its synodical connections. The gathering authorized the appointment of an entertainment committee and pledged support of the synod's medical mission in New Guinea, beginning with 1924, to the extent of not less than \$2,000 annually.

The 1924 convention admitted to membership the "Southern Michigan Federation." "With Christ for Christ," the permanent motto of the league, was chosen on this occasion.

Professor Bodensieck, chairman of the synodical committee on young people's societies and Sunday Schools since 1923, in an address insisted that Bible study should be the central aim of every guild. A society which

## THE WARTBURG LEAGUE

does not pursue this study has no right to exist, he averred, pleading that along with topics like missions and church history, there ought to be a continued searching of Scriptures.

Pastor George Krueger, of Somonauk, Illinois, in his address on the social objectives of the local guild, declared that without social meetings the young people's group can hardly realize all its aims. Social gatherings, he pointed out, rank second; nevertheless they accomplish a very helpful end. Under proper guidance such affairs can lead many young people to apply in life what they learn in the devotional and educational meetings.

### *Stresses Educational Value*

The 1925 convention emphasized the importance of maintaining educational work among

local chapters. The use of Lutheran topic manuals and texts was encouraged in preference to non-Lutheran publications. Discussion brought out the sentiment that all activities of the local league should be made subordinate to matters of education.

The *Lutheran Herald* again was assured of acceptance as the league's official mouthpiece. Circulation of this biweekly among league members was stimulated thru the appointment of a subscription campaign committee. It was felt by this gathering of several hundred young people that only in the event of realizing the proposed union of the Iowa Synod and the Joint Ohio Synod, would it prove advisable to publish a new and larger paper for the joint league organization.

The Wartburg League at the 1925 convention pledged itself to raise a fund of \$500 to assist in the publication of Sunday School charts, showing in this substantial way the desire of the young people to serve the Church. The league had been raising over a number of years, as a gift from the young people, a statue fund. With \$2,014 in 1923, the league completed solicitation for this purpose and erected the Luther statue at Wartburg Sem-

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

inary. When the church mission board appointed Dr. A. B. Estock, of Portland, Oregon, as medical missionary to New Guinea, the league raised \$2,707 for this purpose in 1924. In 1925 the amount raised for missionary, administrative, and sundry purposes rose to \$4,844, over \$4,000 of which was given to the medical mission.

### PRESENT PROPORTIONS

In 1926 a new reading course was added to the synodical program for local guilds. The importance of maintaining a field secretary to promote league work thruout the synod engaged the attention of this year's convention. Over \$4,100 had been contributed during the previous year for medical missions, and a pledge of \$4,000 for this purpose was repeated for the following year.

At the 1927 convention this pledge was raised to \$5,000—four-fifths to go to the synod's medical mission fund as before, and one-fifth to the church extension fund. Contributions during the previous year had amounted to nearly \$15,000. Over \$4,000 of this sum went to support the New Guinea mission, and the balance was divided among a number of causes such as students' aid, orphanages, home missions, church schools, and other educational endeavors. This convention also invited unaffiliated district federations to join the synodical league and adopted a resolution empowering a representative of the executive committee to attend conventions of such associations and to urge them to affiliate.

#### *Education Is Cardinal Aim*

The educational work is counted the basic and most important phase of Wartburg League activity. As Pastor Theophilus Fritschel, of Minneapolis, declared in his presidential address to the 1927 convention at Dubuque, "The Wartburg League has always maintained that one of its chief objects is

## THE WARTBURG LEAGUE

the adoption and promotion of an adequate educational program.”<sup>12</sup>

In 1927 a new, twofold system of topics, embracing a continuous study of church history and a plan of bi-weekly subjects for the local guild, was introduced to raise the standard of the league’s educational endeavor.

“In the short time since reorganization and the adoption of a definite program in 1921,” said Pastor Wiederanders, executive secretary, in 1927, “the influence of the Wartburg League has become noticeable especially in the increased activity of the young people in the work of the Church; their keener sense of responsibility toward the Church; and their greater loyalty to the home congregation.”<sup>13</sup> He counts this achievement a fruit of the educational campaign.

While the Wartburg League does not officially sponsor Sunday School work in the Iowa Synod, and while coöperation of league and Sunday School workers is incidental only to the joint conventions held in Dubuque year after year, nevertheless the correlation of their endeavors under the wing of the synodical committee on young people’s societies and Sunday Schools must be counted a most fruitful by-product of league and Sunday School work. Many leaguers are Sunday School teachers and embrace at once the aims of both organizations.

### *Synod Is Three-fourths Rural*

The Iowa Synod in 1925 numbered 221,571 baptized members in 935 congregations served by

556 active ministers in the United States and Canada. One hundred and twenty-four, or 22.3 per cent, of these pastors then resided in cities of more than 5,000 population; 42, or 7.6 per cent, in towns of 2,500 to 5,000 population; and 390, or 70.1 per cent, in villages of less than 2,500 inhabitants or in the open country.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup>*Lutheran Herald*, XIX, No. 17, p. 275, August 13, 1927.

<sup>13</sup>Personal correspondence.

<sup>14</sup>Adapted from *Lutheran World Almanac*, 1924-1926, summary table, p. 218, and *ibid.*, geographical ministerial directory, pp. 141-180.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

Assuming that, on the average, each city and town pastor serves but a single congregation, then there were 166 city and town churches. The balance of congregations, 769, must be assigned to the 390 rural ministers. The distribution of congregations, then, may be estimated as 13.3 per cent urban; 4.5 per cent intermediate (towns of 2,500-5,000 population); and 82.2 per cent rural.<sup>15</sup>

The Wartburg League is confined to congregations in the United States. In 1927 there were 135 congregations with accredited young people's societies numbering 5,300 members in twelve districts, including one district at large. Since the league embraces fifty per cent of all young people's societies linked into district federations, contact is being established with several independent district federations which, together with the Wartburg League, would raise the membership of the young people's movement in the Iowa Synod to more than ten thousand individuals. Negotiations are under way to include these federations in the general organization.

A number of churches have junior societies in addition to senior leagues. About thirty-nine per cent of the congregations with league chapters today are situated in the city, twelve per cent in towns, and forty-nine per cent in villages of less than 2,500 population or in the open country.<sup>16</sup>

Speaking of the "latent force which the church has in her young people," Pastor Fritschel declared in 1922 that "our societies are united in the Wartburg League for the advancement of our young people thruout the synod."<sup>17</sup> The league has made a good beginning and has merited the moral support of the church it serves. It has helped to keep young people within the congregational fold and has contributed to the church's home and foreign mission enterprises in generous measure.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 141-180.

<sup>16</sup>Adapted from *ibid.*, pp. 141-180, and official directory, Wartburg League.

<sup>17</sup>*The Inception of the Wartburg League.*

## THE TEXAS LUTHER LEAGUE

According to its constitution the object of the league is "to establish the young people firmly upon the foundation of God's Word and to assist them in fulfilling their duty as faithful workers in the local congregation as also in the church at large."<sup>18</sup>

The Wartburg League is destined to grow while these aims are realized and its methods prove effective.

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### *Texas Movement*

### *Parallels*

### *Wartburg League*

The largest of the unattached district federations is the Texas Luther League. The young people's movement in this district of the synod rose independently of the Wartburg League, altho simultaneously with the latter. Earliest records date back to the nineties, and the Austin Luther League, established in 1894, is considered the oldest. Societies soon after were organized in many congregations, but federation was not realized until 1913.

"At the meeting of the Texas Synod held in 1912," writes Mr. H. W. Pfennig, league president, of Pflugerville, Texas,

"Pastor J. Mgebroff suggested that a meeting of all Luther Leagues in the synod be called for the purpose of organizing a state Luther League. In 1913 the Brenham Luther League with its pastor, E. A. Sagebiel, sent invitations to the various leagues thruout the state, to meet at Brenham. On August 9, eleven leagues responded by sending their representatives to perfect a state organization: Salem, Brenham, Cuero, Pflugerville, Austin, Temple, Giddings, Galveston, Wichita Falls, Coryell, and St. John's of San Antonio. Several other leagues were represented by visitors. Under the leadership of Pastor Mgebroff the Luther League of Texas was organized. Pastor Sagebiel was elected the first chairman."<sup>19</sup>

This league has undertaken to raise an endowment fund of \$50,000 for the synod's Lutheran College at Seguin, Texas. Contributions by 1927 exceeded the \$13,-

<sup>18</sup>Constitution, Wartburg League.

<sup>19</sup>Lutheran Herald, XIX, No. 11, p. 183, May 21, 1927.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

000 mark, interest accrued going to the support of indigent students. Other financial achievements include the raising of a fund of several thousand dollars for the synod's student mission work at the University of Texas, Austin, and of a \$400 fund to assist in the support of two young women from Texas who are serving as medical missionaries in the synod's mission field in New Guinea.

### *Aims Are Divers*

At its 1927 convention, held at Mason, Texas, the league passed resolutions to welcome unaffiliated societies to its annual meetings; to encourage performance of religious plays among local guilds; and to support the movement to establish Lutheran student pastors at the state's institutions of higher learning.

Since 1920 the Luther League of Texas has published the *Luther Link*, now a quarterly. The educational endeavor includes the promotion of Bible study and a topic system, as well as the management of a speakers' bureau for local league programs and for the annual conventions. The league aims thereby to "strengthen the faith of the leaguer and increase his knowledge of the Bible and his church."<sup>20</sup>

The league in 1927 numbered twenty-five societies with 1,250 members and included about one-half of the congregational young people's guilds in the Texas branch of the Iowa Synod. It is hoped that the league eventually will embrace all independent young people's societies in this district. Ultimate union with the Wartburg League is another objective.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 183.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S LUTHER LEAGUE OF THE NORWEGIAN LUTHERAN CHURCH

#### EARLY BEGINNINGS

Just how long ago the Young People's Movement arose among Norwegian Lutheran churches, and when the earliest societies came into being, is not known. Tradition tells of large numbers of young people's guilds established in the various branches of the Norwegian Church before 1900; in the early nineties, and even in the eighties, many were known to exist. With encouragement from the Luther League of America, then intersynodical, not a few societies had taken out membership in this organization soon after its establishment in 1895.

Alliances sprang up, too, among societies grouped in geographical units. Wisconsin churches had their Central Luther League, an independent federation which flourished in the early nineties. Dr. O. M. Norlie, then of Stoughton, Wisconsin, was its president in 1901; in 1902 he represented the league as delegate to the national convention of the Luther League of America at St. Paul, Minnesota. Tho made up chiefly of Norwegian young people's guilds, the alliance coöperated with the State Luther League of Wisconsin and used the topic system sponsored by the Luther League of America. The Central Luther League also introduced Bible study among its member guilds, supported home and foreign missions, and promoted social life among its young people.

Similar federations existed in various parts of the Central West where Norwegian churches predominated. Dr. Norlie cites a "Federation of Norwegian Young People's Societies in America," an intersynodical group

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

organized under the leadership of Professor M. O. Wee of Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul, and asserts that there were many Sunday School associations, young people's temperance societies, and choral unions among Norwegian congregations in pre-1900 years.<sup>1</sup>

**Movement Gathers Force** Two major young people's leagues bear particular attention as forerunners of the eventual Young People's Luther League. The earlier was the "Young People's Association," established, with the prompt approval of the Norwegian Synod, in 1903. According to the *Lutheran Herald*,

"The Young People's Association of the Synod of the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church of America traces its origin to the 'Luther College Sunday Association of Decorah, Iowa.' In the winter of 1903 this association resolved to start a movement for more coöperation and for closer union among its young people's societies. A plan of procedure was presented to the church council. The movement received the approval and support of that body, and it was favorably received thruout the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church. The result was that in the following spring a convention of representatives of the young people's societies of the church was called at Decorah, for the purpose of effecting general organization.

"In 1908 another convention was held at Chicago, Illinois, in connection with the meeting of the synod. Numerous smaller conventions took place in various parts of the extended territory of the synod. In June, 1909, an Iowa state organization was effected at Decorah."<sup>2</sup>

**Foster Christian Zeal and Fellowship** Pastor Christian Anderson, of Minneapolis, Minnesota, was the first president of this Young People's Association. According to its constitution the league proposed

"to encourage the formation of young people's societies in all congregations of the synod and of any Lutheran con-

<sup>1</sup>Personal correspondence. Dr. Norlie now is librarian of the National Lutheran Council.

<sup>2</sup>*Lutheran Herald*, II, No. 6, p. 96, June, 1910.

## THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S LUTHER LEAGUE

gregation served by a minister of the synod; to urge affiliation with the Young People's Association of the Synod; to stimulate the members of such organizations to greater zeal in their Christian activity; to foster a spirit of Christian fellowship and true loyalty to the Church; and by rendering such aid as may lie in its power, to improve its members morally, intellectually, and socially."<sup>3</sup>

### *Propose Separate League*

The other organization, representing the Young People's Movement in the United Norwegian Lutheran Church, had held membership in the Luther League of America since an early year, each local society maintaining separate membership in the intersynodical league. By 1908 leaders felt that an independent structure, conforming to synodical organization, would better serve the purpose of young people's work. In June of that year delegates from several societies met at Kenyon, Minnesota, and passed a resolution to form an organization. On October 11, 1908, the "Young People's League of the United Norwegian Lutheran Church" was formally organized in the same city.

Moorhead, Minnesota, witnessed the second meeting of this body, June 23-26, 1910. The 109 delegates present decided to build a mission station at Tsiambe, Madagascar. Pastor M. E. Waldeland, then of St. Ansgar, Iowa, was the first secretary of this league and later its president until the merger in 1917. Professors C. M. Westwig (1910-1912) and M. J. Stolee (1912-1914), both then of the United Norwegian Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Paul, preceded Pastor Waldeland in the presidency.

The Young People's League proved active until its absorption by the Young People's Luther League. Two outstanding developments were its Choral Union and its Students' Union, both vigorous arms of the organization.

A movement, then, irregularly defined yet real, was felt among the young people in Norwegian Lutheran churches as surely as in other Lutheran bodies. Divided

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<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 96.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

according to synodical groups, it awaited the threefold merger of 1917 to assume definite direction.

### *Three Leagues Merge in 1917*

On June 9, 1917, when three Norwegian synods united at St.

Paul to form the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, the blending of their respective young people's leagues also took place. The Young People's Federation of Hauge's Synod, the Young People's Association of the Norwegian Synod, and the Young People's League of the United Norwegian Church were joined into one national body. A temporary constitution was adopted. The new organization was given the name "Consolidated Young People's League."

The following officers were elected:

Pastor J. N. Brown, Austin, Minnesota, president;

Professor G. M. Bruce, Red Wing, Minnesota, vice-president;

Professor O. A. Tingelstad, Decorah, Iowa, secretary; and

Honorable J. N. Jacobson, Hills, Minnesota, treasurer.

In this way a happy start was made. The spirit of youth, pledged to noble purpose, was destined, under the guidance of wise, devoted leadership, to accomplish much. It had but to await opportunities.

## DEVELOPMENTS

Since this fusion was effected simultaneously with the synodical merger, official recognition of the need for work among the young people was accorded by the Norwegian Lutheran Church in its 1917 convention. From the beginning of the movement the body to which the league was subordinate sanctioned young people's work and showed active interest in the new venture. To promote the cause, space was provided in the *Lutheran Church Herald*, official synodical organ, a weekly which appeared for the first time in July of that year.

The first effort to create congregational interest in the organization, which soon was called the "Young Peo-

## THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S LUTHER LEAGUE

ple's Luther League," appeared as a discourse in an early issue of the official organ, on the subject, "Is Modern Evangelism Harmful to the Church?" The following issue of the *Lutheran Church Herald* devoted generous space to a view of certain biblical topics. From the inception of the reorganized league, then, an educational topic system was fostered.

With the alignment of the three young people's leagues on a common administrative basis came efforts to promote the movement by enlarging the membership in the new national organization. At the synodical merger in 1917, which itself did not embrace a young people's gathering, committees had been appointed to organize young people's societies in each of the districts of the reorganized church. By 1918 these committees succeeded in establishing district leagues, some of these districts having been divided previously into circuits.

### *Call Paid Secretary Early*

Profiting by the experience of other Lutheran young people's associations, members and leaders of the Young People's Luther League early sought to create the office of paid field secretary. Accordingly, in 1918 the board of directors called N. M. Ylvisaker, camp pastor at Houston, Texas, and formerly minister in Chicago. Pastor Ylvisaker entered upon his new office at Minneapolis on April 1, 1919.

Now with the appointment of a full-time secretary the league was destined to make more rapid strides in accomplishing its avowed purpose of keeping the young people with the Church. While the original enrollment in the national group numbered two hundred local societies, membership increased until in 1919 the league included five hundred accredited chapters. It was estimated that there were then more than 1,200 young people's guilds in the entire Norwegian Church.

Early in 1919 a call was issued to these societies for a general convention of young people to be held at Red

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

Wing, Minnesota. On May 16 upwards of 10,000 delegates, visitors, and pastors, representing 700 local societies in all quarters of the church, attended this first general gathering of youth within the Norwegian Lutheran Church. The meeting proved auspicious for the movement. Plans for the coming years and problems of league work in city and country featured the discussions.

Luther's triple foundation, "The Word alone, Grace alone, Faith alone," was adopted at this convention as the motto for the league.

### *Invite Student Interest*

One must turn to the Norwegian Lutheran Church to find outstanding interest in young people's work among the students attending the higher educational and theological institutions of the church. The league plan and program had hardly become firmly rooted in the soil of the church, when a federation of students was proposed to aid in carrying out the objects to which the league had pledged itself. On February 3, 1918, the "Lutheran Students' Union" was organized at Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul. Membership was offered to all students attending the institutions of higher learning in the Norwegian Lutheran Church.

Students from fourteen of the synod's colleges, seminaries, normal schools, and academies were present to effect this union, which aimed "to foster the religious life and activity among the students of the Church; to promote the spirit of fellowship among them; to foster interest in the church schools; and to promote interest in the missionary activity of the Church and to work for foreign missions."<sup>4</sup> Mr. T. F. Braaten, then of Concordia College, Moorhead, was elected president.

Throughout the church, the Lutheran Students' Union was counted a most worthy agency for fostering among the students an early and intelligent interest in young people's work as well as in the church's home and foreign

<sup>4</sup>*Lutheran Church Herald*, II, No. 7, p. 106, February 15, 1918.

## THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S LUTHER LEAGUE

mission enterprises. Commenting on this new departure, the *Lutheran Church Herald* asserted that

"our schools are built to serve the Church, and this association will emphasize this one important purpose. If our young people go out from our schools as earnest, enthusiastic, and true Christians, they will serve the Church whether they go directly into the service of the Church or not. The Christian high school teacher, lawyer, doctor, farmer, or business man has abundant opportunity to serve the Church and to use his many talents in the Master's service."<sup>5</sup>

### *Union Granted District Powers*

At the 1922 convention of the Young People's Luther League at La Crosse, Wisconsin, the

Lutheran Students' Union was elevated to the rank of district, with delegate privileges equal to those of other districts. The union now numbers about four thousand students and holds a most important place in the activities of the league. In accordance with the league's emphasis on foreign mission work, each student member subscribes one dollar a year in support of three foreign missionaries. All of the twenty-one institutions of the synod are represented in the annual delegate conventions of the union.

In its 1927 convention at St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota, the Lutheran Students' Union pledged a fund of \$400 to aid the Young People's Luther League as in previous years. On this occasion the Lutheran Student Editorial Association, represented on the same campuses as the Lutheran Students' Union, was organized as an auxiliary to the union. This movement was an outgrowth of similar efforts begun at the 1923 student convention at Albert Lea, Minnesota, on the instigation of Mr. Laurentius Xavier, then editor of the *Waldorf Lobbyist*, Waldorf College, Forest City, Iowa. The association proposed to "encourage the creation of a more definitely religious atmosphere thru the medium of the college press."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>6</sup>*Christ First*, Young People's Luther League Convention Yearbook, 1927, pp. 186-187.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

The president of the Lutheran Students' Union was made *ex officio* president of this press association.

The conviction crystallized at the 1927 convention of this union, according to Pastor Ylvisaker, was that "thru an earnest synodical program of student work—thru these synodical student organizations—will the most effective and far-reaching results be attained in the great field of student religious work."<sup>7</sup>

*Synod  
Coöperates*

A noteworthy feature of the Young People's Luther League's early years was the spirit of co-operation manifest between church and league. In 1919

the synod adopted resolutions to welcome the league's executive secretary at the church's district conventions, and to recognize him as a church officer, with corresponding privileges. Thus the church reaffirmed its approval of young people's work. Today the president and executive secretary of the league are privileged to sit with the church council—the governing board of the church, —and to take part in its annual deliberations.

The Young People's Luther League has ever solicited the interest of all young people's guilds within its church and has urged them to affiliate. From the beginning, too, the official organ of the church has stood by with a generous measure of favorable comment, while farsighted leaders have earnestly endeavored to encourage the growth—numerically and spiritually—of the movement. In 1920 Dr. H. G. Stub, of St. Paul, then president of the Norwegian Lutheran Church, pointed out that "every church body expecting growth in the future must look upon the young people as the main source of growth under our Savior and heavenly King."<sup>8</sup>

And Pastor Ylvisaker, executive secretay, in an address to the general pastoral conference at Luther Theological Seminary, St. Paul, in 1920, on the subject, "The

<sup>7</sup>*Lutheran Church Herald*, XI, No. 13, p. 399, March 29, 1927.  
<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, IV, No. 14, p. 216, April 6, 1920.

## THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S LUTHER LEAGUE

Young People's Luther League in Its Relation to the Activities of Our Church," declared:

"We are face to face with a tremendous responsibility as members of the Christian Church. As Christians we are responsible for the Christian training of the growing generation of church workers. And as Lutheran Christians we are concerned with the problem of preserving the youth of our church for future active membership.

### FIELD WHITE UNTO THE HARVEST

"The young people of our church constitute today the greatest mission field of the church, the field more ripe for the harvest than any other. . . . In the young people of the Church there lies a force, dormant at present, but full of possibilities for blessings to the Church, if it could be aroused and made the agency for good that it should be.

"To bridge the gap heretofore existing between confirmation and adult membership, to awaken this dormant force of young workers to their responsibilities as well as their privileges, to set in motion an agency heretofore largely neglected in our church, and thus to reinforce the armies already engaged in the battles of the church to which we belong—such was the underlying motive which resulted in the organization of the Young People's Luther League."<sup>9</sup>

### PRESENT PROPORTIONS

With the addition of the provincial leagues of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, Canada, prior to 1922, the second triennial convention of the league became an international event. This gathering of young people took place at La Crosse, Wisconsin, June 8-11, 1922. Registration included 674 delegates, 402 visitors, and 101 pastors, and total attendance exceeded ten thousand people. These represented every section of the Norwegian Lutheran Church.

Church extension, the topic system, and junior league work were the major subjects discussed. Addresses by

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<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, IV, No. 45, pp. 1009-1010, November 9, 1920.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

pastors and educators, public servants and laymen, on the subject, "The Life Worth While," featured the program.

### ***Believes in Youth***

Mr. Carsten E. Ronning, of Chicago, then president of the Chicago circuit, in pointing out the importance of fostering young people's work declared:

"The Young People's Luther League is not a social enterprise; nor is it merely a literary undertaking as some would make it. It is intended to be a training station—a faith-strengthening, soul-winning, living organization of and for alert young Lutherans desiring to learn more about their Master and how best to serve His cause."<sup>10</sup>

And Pastor John Peterson, of Minneapolis, topics editor, in appraising the aim of the topic system, said:

"The topic system aims to develop our personal life of faith, hope, and love. It aims to make us spiritual men and women, and many believe that this is the chief feature of the young people's society. . . . The heart of our Christian religion is the life of personal fellowship with the Savior. . . . Our topic system endeavors to cherish, develop, and strengthen this life in our hearts."<sup>11</sup>

### ***Scores Language Complex***

The language problem also was considered at the La Crosse convention. Honorable J. A. O. Preus, then governor of Minnesota, in speaking of the danger of perpetuating the traditional language, warned his audience:

"If you are not going to lose your solidarity as a Lutheran Church and have your boys and girls driven away from you, you will have to satisfy yourselves that this church is no longer a Norwegian Lutheran church, but an American Lutheran church in the United States. Out of consideration for your church, I would ask you to allow this church to become as rapidly as possible an English-speaking church. . . . The Dutch went to pieces, as Roosevelt said, because they spoke Dutch too long."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup>*Senior Luther League.*

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>12</sup>*Lutheran Church Herald*, VI, No. 25, p. 774, June 20, 1922.

## THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S LUTHER LEAGUE

Perhaps the most far-reaching achievement of the 1922 convention was signalized in the impetus given to junior work. This venture had first been initiated in the Chicago circuit in 1920. By 1922 it had appeared in many quarters of the league. By the end of 1923, forty junior societies were affiliated with the league.

*Stresses Junior Work for City and Country* Pleading for greater attention to this phase, Pastor Grant M. Rundhaug, of Chicago, a pioneer in junior work among Chicago circuit leagues, asserted:

"Junior work is a most valuable undertaking for the future welfare of the Young People's Luther League, and we must do work along this line in our congregations in the larger cities. But . . . it will prove very beneficial in the smaller village and rural leagues as well. . . .

"The problem of keeping the newly confirmed is one with which nearly every congregation is obliged to wrestle. Confirmation years are not only the period of life when the young people are most easily influenced by religious tendencies, but also the time when they are most often lost to the Church. . . .

"There are very few senior leagues who have twenty per cent of the last two confirmation classes in attendance. Some leagues are fortunate in getting them back later on, but in most cases, after the young people have been left for two or three years to shift for themselves, they are lost as far as league work is concerned. . . . But why not have an organization during these years in which they may acquire good training in league work and be able to do far more than they would otherwise? . . . The junior league has this as its aim. It will tend to bridge over this very critical age for our young people."<sup>13</sup>

*See Importance of Boy's Work* Prompted by concern awakened in the needs and capabilities of boys of teens age, a committee on junior league and boys' work submitted resolutions to the 1922 convention, expressing the opinion

"that our church does not foster any national boys' organizations; that local conditions may make a boys' club desirable; that all the meetings of such a club should

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<sup>13</sup>*Junior League Work.*

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

be featured by some devotional exercises. As suggested activities may be mentioned nature study, picnics, hikes, summer and winter sports, and athletics. Every member of the club is expected to be a regular attendant at Bible class or Sunday School. No one negligent in this is eligible to participate in athletic contests of the club."<sup>14</sup>

These resolutions were adopted by the convention, and to enhance the cause of junior league work, the appointment of a junior league secretary was authorized.

### *Leave Door Open for Secretaryships*

The international organization took another important step when, by resolution of the 1922 convention, it authorized the executive board to appoint full-time secretaries, as the work should demand and funds allow. The gathering further went on record as encouraging all its member societies to support the church extension fund, primarily a home mission cause. A goal of \$20,000 was set for the year.<sup>15</sup>

Since 1922, funds have been raised for the church's building program on the foreign mission fields. The league has since erected a mission hospital in Madagascar and has contributed liberally to building funds in China<sup>16</sup> and Zululand.

### *Third Gathering Proves Epochal*

The third triennial convention of the Young People's Luther League was held at Minneapolis, June 6-10, 1925. Registered attendance numbered 1,082 delegates, 782 visitors, and 161 pastors. Many others brought the average attendance to approximately 3,000 at each regular session. Held at the same time as the Norse-American Centennial Celebration, several of the

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>15</sup>The American Scandinavian Foundation in 1923 awarded Pastor Ylvisaker with a fellowship which, besides giving him opportunity to matriculate at one of the European universities, would enable him to study the young people's movements abroad. During his absence Pastor John Peterson, topics editor, assumed the duties of executive secretary.

<sup>16</sup>Support of missions in China ceased in 1927, pending resumption of missionary activities suspended by civil strife.

## THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S LUTHER LEAGUE

league's sessions were merged into the activities of this event.

The 1925 convention goes on record as a significant step forward in the progress of the league. The league's financial project for 1925 was to establish a scholarship fund of \$20,000 among the members of the international body, the interest from which was to be used for scholarships granted to graduates of the church's senior colleges upon entering the theological seminary. An offering accordingly was raised on the floor of the convention, amounting in subscriptions and pledges to \$14,100. An additional fund later was raised among leagues not represented at the convention, to defray the administrative expenses attaching to league work.

The general theme of all addresses at the Minneapolis meeting was "Forward with Christ." Pastor Ylvisaker in his executive report asserted that in the few years since its beginning in 1917, the Young People's Luther League already was "exerting the greatest possible influence upon the spiritual life of the Church," and that "the blessings God has showered upon the league" were "a solemn reminder that only as we go forward with Christ will there be real progress in our work and real blessing from it."<sup>17</sup> The greatest task of the Church, he averred, is "to interest the youth of today in the work of the Church and to influence them for the Christ life."<sup>18</sup>

### *Mentions Results of Effort*

Five distinct achievements, the executive secretary pointed out, had marked the progress of the league since its inception. In 1917 the league raised \$12,000 for the Lutheran cantonment fund. Later it founded a hospital in Madagascar for the church's foreign mission board. For two years the organization supported the church extension fund, the interest to be used by the home mission board to build chapels on the home

<sup>17</sup>*Forward with Christ*, Young People's Luther League Convention Yearbook, 1925, p. 117.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 5.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

mission field. In 1924 the league again supported the building fund of the foreign mission board. Funds contributed were apportioned among the three foreign mission fields of the synod. And the project for 1925 was realized in the support of the scholarship and league extension funds.

Up to 1925 only one full-time worker had been employed, besides a part-time educational secretary and topics editor. League members and leaders now felt that with all the administrative and extension work in view, more full-time workers were necessary. In pursuit of their realization Pastor Ylvisaker voiced nine distinct needs, viz.: enlargement of field work, of junior league work, and of boys' and girls' clubwork; placing of pastors for work among students at state institutions of higher learning; enhancement of closer relation with the Choral Union; assignment of proper literature for the local young people's guilds; establishment of a service department for the league; creation of a full-time secretaryship to administer the league's financial program; and support of WCAL, the radio broadcasting station at Northfield, Minnesota.<sup>19</sup> In 1926 leaguers contributed \$1,000 to the support of this endeavor of the church to broadcast its message.

Resolutions adopted by the 1925 convention included a constitutional amendment to substitute triennial with biennial conventions for the international league, in order to alternate with the biennial conventions of its districts as well as of the church; and redirection of the league's financial program thru its treasurer as financial secretary, under the supervision of the league's executive committee. The league had previously abolished the dues system and had placed its finances on a voluntary subscription basis. To date the Young People's Luther League has never been in debt.

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<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 123-126.

## THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S LUTHER LEAGUE

### *Synod Reaffirms Position*

The spirit of coöperation between church and league, manifest since the league's inception, was reëmphasized at the Minneapolis gathering. Representatives of the Norwegian Lutheran Church commended the league for its progress and for its well-organized effort in behalf of the young people; expressing interest in the work; welcoming closer coöperation between church council and league administration; and urging conferences between the council and the league president and secretary to consider matters of mutual concern. In response, the convention resolved to accept the invitation to league representation on the church council.

Other resolutions included approval of the suggestion to incorporate monthly magazine issues, designed especially for the young people, in the *Lutheran Church Herald*; encouragement of the effort to establish auxiliary young people's societies on the foreign mission field in Madagascar, China, and Zululand;<sup>20</sup> and recommendations to establish separate group organizations for boys and girls, sponsored by the league and standing in close relation to the churches, "with a program looking toward their physical, mental, moral, and spiritual welfare"<sup>21</sup> among the 30,000 boys and girls between the ages of thirteen and sixteen in the Norwegian Lutheran Church.

### *Welcome Choral Union*

Singing is coming into its rightful place in the Young People's Luther League as an expression of youth spirit. "We believe," it was declared at the 1925 convention,

"that in our Lutheran musical literature, hymnology, and liturgy we possess an embodiment of the spirit and teachings of historic Lutheranism of untold value and an unsurpassed agency for praising God and giving expression to Christian experience and aspirations. We believe in a

<sup>20</sup>Numerous young people's auxiliaries have since been formed in Madagascar, with regular conventions. Organization is also under way in Zululand.

<sup>21</sup>*Forward with Christ*, pp. 143-144.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

persistent and church-wide effort in behalf of a larger appreciation and use of distinctively Lutheran music and of better congregational singing in general."<sup>22</sup>

By resolution of the convention, the "Choral Union of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America," founded independently in 1917 at St. Paul under the leadership of Dr. P. M. Glasoe of St. Olaf College, Northfield, and representing all the church choirs and choral societies of the synod, was brought into organic relation with the league. With its annual "Sangerfests," the union aims to reawaken interest in choral and hymn-singing thruout the church. Dr. Glasoe has been its president since its beginning. The Choral Union now is an auxiliary of the Young People's Luther League on the same footing as the Lutheran Students' Union, with official representation on the league's national executive board; —the former with its president and executive secretary, the latter with its president.

District and circuit leagues now elect directors and music committees which have charge of music at their respective conventions. The resolution of 1925 specified further that, at every district and circuit gathering of young people, "one session shall be devoted to a consideration of the history, merits, and improvement of choir, liturgical, and congregational singing."<sup>23</sup>

The revival of sacred song thus was counted and encouraged as a most helpful feature of large gatherings of young people. "Hymn-sings" now feature many young people's meetings in Norwegian Lutheran churches. These events have given rise to the publishing and distribution of 40,000 convention songbooks, designed to quicken revival of the tradition that the Lutheran Church is the singing church.

*Begin  
\$15,000 Project*

In order to hasten the day of a well-balanced program of league-wide endeavor, the na-

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 144.

## THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S LUTHER LEAGUE

tional executive board in 1925 adopted resolutions to appoint the treasurer of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America the *de facto* treasurer of the Young People's Luther League. This act was designed to give the league administration the advantage attaching to modern systems of bookkeeping.

A \$15,000 project was launched, providing for the continued full-time service of an executive secretary and an office secretary; the part-time service of an editor of program helps; the full-time service of a student secretary who would devote his time to the spiritual care of Lutheran young men and women attending the state institutions of higher learning; continued financial support of the broadcasting station at St. Olaf College to the extent of \$1,000 for 1927; a bureau of information for the benefit of local, circuit, and district leagues; and for other expenses incidental to the advance of the league and of its work among the young people.

Other resolutions called for energetic and continuing young people's support of the synod's budget campaign for home and foreign missions, charities, and Christian education, as well as for coöperation with the congregations in supporting the endowment fund campaigns for the higher schools of the church. The sixteen hundred local societies of the league were to be appealed to for this support.

### *Count Student Work Greatest Need*

The resolution providing for a student secretary, to be appointed by the synod's board of education, was counted most significant. Today the scheme to carry on systematic work among the students at state colleges and universities is regarded as "one of the most important fields in the entire Norwegian Lutheran Church, from a missionary standpoint."<sup>24</sup> C. S. Thorpe, pastor of the University Church of Hope, Minneapolis, and one of the synod's pioneer student pas-

<sup>24</sup>*Lutheran Church Herald*, X, No. 5, p. 151, February 2, 1926.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

tors, in 1927 was placed in temporary charge of the league's new endeavor.

Another forward step was taken when the executive committee of the league early in 1926 appointed five standing committees. Topics, literature, junior work, music, and social work are the phases which the committees were enjoined to develop.

Recent activities of the Young People's Luther League include the publishing of a *Convention Songbook* in its eighth edition; promotion of the circulation of the *Lutheran Church Herald* on the part of leaguers and local societies everywhere; and encouragement of Bible study thru the conduct of vacation Bible Chautauquas in several districts. The latter endeavor is gaining in popularity among the districts, which report good attendance at the schools and genuine interest in the movement.

The national executive board in its October, 1926, meeting at Minneapolis pledged a \$500 emergency fund for the student secretary, as well as \$300 in support of the "Student Pastors' Association." The board resolved also to appoint a Young People's Luther League representative in each of the church's foreign mission fields.

Within the two years preceding the Seattle convention the league had raised among its members \$57,000, \$43,000 of which went to support the church's home and foreign mission enterprises. The balance was set apart as a scholarship fund for theological students.

### *Revive Festival of Sacred Music*

With the calling of the Luther College Concert Band and the St. Olaf Lutheran Choir, two nationally-known musical organizations in the Middle West, as well as the Concordia College Choir of Moorhead, Minnesota, and with the merging of activities of the league and of its auxiliary, the Choral Union, at Seattle, Washington, the 1927 convention of the Young People's Luther League exalted the ministry of music. A registered attendance of 1,700 delegates, visitors, and

## THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S LUTHER LEAGUE

pastors, besides a chorus of fourteen hundred voices as well as many others which brought the attendance at the Sunday sessions well above the fifteen thousand mark, made this event the greatest international gathering in the history of the entire Norwegian Lutheran Church.

### *Exalt Noblest Ideal*

Representative church and lay leaders addressed the convention on the league problems at hand, centering their remarks on the convention theme, "Christ First." This gathering repeated earlier emphasis on the importance of advancing the junior movement with a view to improving where possible the motives and method of the endeavor. Pastor L. M. Stavig, of Tacoma, Washington, in his address on junior league work declared:

"Increasing numbers of boys and girls today go outside their homes to spend their leisure hours. They want social affairs, basketball, baseball, sewing, painting, hiking, and camping. They are looking for agencies to satisfy them. Unless the Church provides them with these opportunities, they will find them elsewhere or they will find substitutes. Unless we make it possible for them to find their friends in the informal, social, and recreational atmosphere of the Church, they will find them elsewhere. Here, then, is a splendid opportunity for the junior league to capitalize this appeal and to center still more of the interest of the boys and girls in their church."<sup>25</sup>

And Pastor J. M. Runestad, of Menno, South Dakota, speaking on junior league problems, reminded his audience that "the aim to keep our children in fellowship with Christ from the day of their baptism, thru young manhood and young womanhood, is not only idealism, but practical Christianity."<sup>26</sup>

A fund of over \$17,000 was raised on the floor of the 1927 convention. Resolutions included the contribution of \$500 toward the endowment of Pacific Lutheran College at Parkland, Washington, and a recommendation that, in recognition of the vital importance of main-

<sup>25</sup>*Christ First*, Convention Yearbook, 1927, p. 180.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 140.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

taining institutions of higher learning, the league executive board include in the national project for the following two years the raising of funds for the synod's secondary schools.

The social program of the convention culminated in a nine-day voyage to Alaska.

*Gathering Tokens  
New Landsightings* Commenting on the historic and spiritual values attaching to the Seattle convention, Executive Secretary Ylvisaker remarked:

"It was an outstanding event in the history of our church on the West Coast, because here for the first time was held a religious convention which was more than a young people's meeting. The Seattle gathering was a *church* convention, bringing to the West an impression of a great church bent upon a great mission. Here were gathered, too, for the first time, the chosen leaders of our church —a larger number than had ever before visited the West at one time. . . .

"From this place, with its sacred associations, its blessed messages and its hallowed memories, they may return to the home altars with a greater zeal, a firmer faith, a more fervent love, and a more self-sacrificing devotion to that calling with which we all have been called by Him who blessed us in holy baptism."<sup>27</sup>

The national board of directors in its 1927 meeting resolved to add a full-time secretary to the staff of league workers; to inaugurate an institute and conference movement for the benefit of local leagues thruout the church; and to publish a monthly magazine for young people, in connection with the *Lutheran Church Herald*.

## RECAPITULATION

### *Church and League Predominantly Rural*

The Norwegian Lutheran Church of America in 1925 numbered more than 485,000 baptized members in 3,146 congregations served by 1,208 active pastors in the United States and Canada. Three

<sup>27</sup>*Lutheran Church Herald*, XI, No. 35, pp. 1092 and 1094, August 30, 1927.

## THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S LUTHER LEAGUE

hundred sixty-two, or 30.0 per cent, of the ministers then resided in cities of more than 5,000 population; seventy-eight, or 6.5 per cent, in towns of 2,500 to 5,000 population; and 768, or 63.6 per cent, in places of less than 2,500 population or in the open country.<sup>28</sup>

Assuming that, on the average, each city and town pastor serves but a single congregation, then there were 440 city and town churches. The balance of 2,706 congregations must be assigned to the 768 rural ministers. The distribution of congregations, then, may be estimated as 11.5 per cent urban; 2.5 per cent intermediate (2,500-5,000 population); and 86.0 per cent rural.<sup>29</sup>

The Young People's Luther League in 1927 numbered over 1,600 young people's societies embracing upwards of 100,000 members. Of the congregations with league chapters about eighteen per cent are situated in the city; four per cent in towns of 2,500 to 5,000 population; and seventy-eight per cent in places of less than 2,500 population or in the open country.<sup>30</sup>

The Norwegian Lutheran Church has a higher proportion of churches with young people's societies than any other branch of the American Lutheran Church. Its rural churches, too, have the highest proportion of young people's guilds. Forty-four per cent of all its churches, and forty per cent of its estimated 2,706 rural congregations in 1925 included one or more guilds affiliated with the official synodical federation.<sup>31</sup>

*Counts Youth Great Force* Said Pastor Ylvisaker in 1924:

"We believe that the Young People's Luther League has a very definite share" in the world-task of serving the Lord. "We are more than ever established in this conviction: if the Church has any cause which has the right to be called a *first cause*, it is most assuredly this work of

<sup>28</sup>Adapted from *Lutheran World Almanac*, 1924-1926, summary table, p. 218, and *ibid.*, geographical ministerial directory, pp. 141-180.

*Ibid.*, pp. 141-180.

<sup>30</sup>Adapted from *ibid.*, pp. 141-180, and official directory, Young People's Luther League.

31 *Ibid.*

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

establishing our youth in their Christian faith and of calling them into active service as consecrated missionaries of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"The Young People's Movement in our church today is the greatest single power that the church possesses. It is a force with which we must reckon. Its influence will be for good if its activities are wisely directed."<sup>32</sup>

And in appraising the 1925 convention and commenting on its inspirational appeal, the executive secretary pointed out:

"The time has come when the Church must have the consecrated coöperation of a younger generation which is thoroly dedicated to the Master's service. With our youth committed to a program which will carry them ever 'forward with Christ,' the Church sees fulfilled the promises of a better day."<sup>33</sup>

At the end of ten years of successful league endeavor President Martin Hegland, of St. Olaf College, Northfield, in 1927 pointed to "the development of a league consciousness" as "one of the most evident achievements." The great need for the coming years, he declared, was "to bring to the local young people's societies information concerning the best methods of doing Christian young people's work; to stimulate to more definite and systematic Bible study; and to inspire to definitely personal Christian faith and life."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>*Lutheran Church Herald*, VIII, No. 40, p. 1263, September 30, 1924.

<sup>33</sup>*Forward with Christ*, p. 6.

<sup>34</sup>*Lutheran Church Herald*, XI, No. 47, p. 1483, Nov. 22, 1927.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE GENERAL LUTHER LEAGUE OF THE JOINT OHIO SYNOD

The year 1923 marks the beginning of concerted effort to encourage young people's work and to bring existing societies into one fold within the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Ohio and Other States.

A call was issued in the fall to congregations throughout the synod, urging their young people's guilds to send delegates to a general convention at Columbus, Ohio. The avowed motive was to federate local societies into a synodical league. It was felt, too, that the synod had as large a proportion of so-called "Luther Leagues" as any other Lutheran body.

#### *Columbus Is Cradle of League*

On November 30, 1923, several hundred young people gathered for a three-day session at Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, Columbus, to consider plans for uniting the forces of young people within the Ohio Synod. It was recognized at the outset that this meeting was to be but tentative, pending approval of its resolutions by the synodical authorities.

The efforts of the past, the hope for the future, and the form of organization were among the themes discussed. Pastor Arthur H. Kuhlman, then of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in speaking on the subject, "Past, Present, and Future," declared that "the young people's society of former days did very little in a religious way. Its purpose was to serve as a social organization for the young people. . . . Religious teaching was not done effectively, and there was no definite program or aim. But during recent years the Luther League idea has been growing."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Minutes, First Annual Convention, General Luther League, 1923.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

Giving credit to the presence of young people's leagues in other synods, Pastor Kuhlman continued, "We hope that you will make the watchword of the future, 'A Luther League in every congregation in the Joint Synod,'" and called on the young people thru their chosen agency, the synodical league, to help solve present-day problems in the Church, stating that "the Church today is facing dangers as never before."<sup>2</sup>

### *League and Church Face Same Task*

It was emphasized at the first convention that the league was confronted with the same task as the Church—the task of saving souls. Said Dr. R. E. Golladay, *pastor loci*:

"I remember in the days of my early ministry the controversies that were raised in church papers about the lawfulness of having an organized Luther League even in the local congregation. It was the old controversy which had already raged about the organization of a 'ladies' aid' in the congregation.

"I am ready to grant that there were fathers with just as much love for the Church as we have, but I am convinced that they were laboring under faulty conceptions, and their superconservatism made them slow to learn."

Dr. Golladay reminded his audience that

"The Sunday Schools, the ladies' aids of various names, the 'Lutheran Brotherhood Association,' the Luther Leagues, and other organizations are not attempts to divide the congregation into opposing elements. They are but an attempt to originate and coordinate the matters of congenial elements of the congregation for real coöperative effort. They are the various branches of the congregation organized to coöperate thru their own branch with the congregation in encouraging the one great work of the Kingdom. . . .

### OBJECT IS MANIFOLD

"The primary object is the cultivation of ideals, the enlargement of our knowledge with respect to the Kingdom of God, the work of the Church, the building up of character and life, and the culture of our spiritual susceptibilities."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

## THE OHIO SYNOD LUTHER LEAGUE

It was the consensus at the Columbus gathering—a meeting of young people including several hundred delegates from Luther Leagues as far west as California and from Pennsylvania and Maryland on the east—that a permanent organization was necessary to promote the best interests of the separate guilds. It was felt also that the local congregations, as well as the district leagues, which already embraced many societies, should foster the local groups.

The convention strongly advocated the adoption of missionary endeavors for the young people. The question whether societies should open their doors to young people of other churches was met with the response, "Welcome them."

*Adopt Name* The following resolutions were adopted at the first meeting at Columbus:

"We, the members of the district-federated leagues of Joint Synod congregations, desire to form a permanent organization of all young people's societies of the Joint Synod of Ohio, and we suggest that the name shall be 'The General Luther League of the Joint Synod of Ohio and Other States.'

"Be it further resolved that the object of this organization shall be:

"1. To guide and strengthen all the activities of all our young people.

"2. To further the interest of the Lutheran Church in general.

"3. To promote a fraternal spirit among all members and friends.

"4. To deepen interest in the Kingdom of God.

"5. To establish Luther Leagues in each congregation of the Joint Synod."<sup>4</sup>

Other resolutions passed by the convention included the adoption of a constitution and a recommendation that all Luther Leagues use the topic system as outlined in the quarterly, *Studies for Luther Leagues and Young People's Societies*, edited by Pastor Kuhlman, beginning in 1922.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

Officers elected at Columbus to pilot the league thru its first year were:

Mr. A. S. Koenreich, Canton, Ohio, president;

Mr. Martin Schurmann, Blue Island, Illinois, first vice-president;

Mr. Clarence Borgemeyer, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, second vice-president;

Miss Grace Boehl, Baltimore, Maryland, third vice-president;

Mr. C. T. Meuser, Columbus, Ohio, fourth vice-president;

Miss Helen Tagge, Blue Island, Illinois, recording secretary;

Pastor A. A. Ahn, Delaware, Ohio, corresponding secretary; and

Mr. G. W. Scheid, Monroeville, Ohio, treasurer.

Pastor Kuhlman, who had been instrumental in encouraging the organization of the league, was chosen advisory member on the executive board.

### *Raise \$60,000 for Chair of Bible*

The second convention of the General Luther League was held at Sandusky, Ohio, in 1924, the third at Blue Island, Illinois, in 1925, the fourth at Canton, Ohio, in 1926, the fifth at Toledo, Ohio, in 1927.

The Sandusky gathering resolved to raise a fund of \$40,000 to endow the chair of Bible at Capital University, Columbus, as part of the Ohio Synod's plans to raise \$500,000 for this institution. Individual societies previously had given voluntary support to the library of the university as well as to other institutions of the synod. The league fund for the chair of Bible amounted to \$60,000—a surplus of fifty per cent over the original aim.

Beginning with January, 1925, a monthly house organ, the *Luther League Worker*, was published for the benefit of Luther Leaguers in Ohio Synod congregations. Pastor Kuhlman was made editor. A series of "Luther

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<sup>6</sup>Many young people's societies had called themselves "Luther Leagues" before the advent of the synodical General Luther League.

## THE OHIO SYNOD LUTHER LEAGUE

League Topics" constitutes an important item in this periodical. Reaching more than 1,200 subscribers, the *Luther League Worker* is credited with having done much to gather the societies and members into a common fold.

### *Press Leads the Way*

From the start, this house organ has functioned as a measure of expression for clerical and lay leaders of the movement, and as a treasury of plans and suggestions for local guilds. Never polemic, yet ever stressing Christian character; always inspirational, devotional, and optimistic, the *Luther League Worker* has filled a necessary niche in the league economy.

Commenting on the importance of the social phase in Church and league, Mr. Koenreich, as president of the league, wrote in 1925:

"It is one of the functions of the Church to create sociability. The cultivation of social purity is one of the great objects which the Church must seek. Since the desire to seek association is born to man, it must be the object of the Church to direct this desire into the channel of Christian association.

"The Church must therefore become a social center. She must strive to make this center so attractive that people, and especially the young folk, will be attracted away from the association which the world offers. . . .

"The social functions of the Church must lift people to a higher plane of morality than the world offers. They must establish a happy medium with a high moral standard so attractive that people will turn as to a light. In the past, many church organizations have been either very puritanic and sanctimonious; or they have gone to the other extreme, equally undesirable—by letting down to a plane of morality little above that which the world offers. If we meet for literary purposes, let that be of the highest and most instructive nature. If it be simply for association, let our conversation and our activities be of the most elevating nature."<sup>6</sup>

And pointing to "Christianity's Claim on Young Peo-

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<sup>6</sup>*Luther League Worker*, I, No. 4, pp. 4-5, April, 1925.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

ple," Pastor R. H. Long, of Pittsburgh, asserted in the same year:

"It is in youth especially that the claims of Christianity ought to receive earnest consideration. It is because of this formative period of young manhood and young womanhood that Christianity ought to receive much attention. It ought to occupy first place in the thought and life of the young people. 'Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.'<sup>7</sup> Young people who neglect to give prime consideration to the claims of Christianity are preparing for evil days."<sup>8</sup>

### *League Projects Are Well Supported*

Among the achievements of the General Luther League since its beginning in 1923 are the endowment of the chair of Bible at Capital University; the appointment of Pastor Kuhlman, now of Columbus, to an executive secretaryship in 1927; the establishment of a Lutheran Chautauqua at Lakeside, Ohio; and, since 1925, the conduct of the vacation camps at Long Lake, Illinois.

Physical recreation, religious education, and spiritual refreshment are the outstanding features of the latter two endeavors. The 1925 Chautauqua at Lakeside, for example, included a pantomime on church and synodical history, prepared by the young people of the league.

A service bureau has been established. In 1925 this department installed a motion film library, a stereopticon slide bureau, and a course of lectures by churchmen of the Ohio Synod. A special library fund has also been created to place books in the libraries of Capital University, Phalen Lutheran Seminary at St. Paul, Minnesota, and other synodical institutions of higher learning. Receipts for this fund have exceeded the \$1,000 mark annually. The library fund campaign, launched at the 1925 convention at Blue Island, in 1928 was the outstanding object of the league.

The aim of many individual societies has been to help raise funds for church repairs and equipment, as well as

<sup>7</sup>*Eccl. 12:1.*

<sup>8</sup>*Luther League Worker, I, No. 1, p. 7, January, 1925.*

## THE OHIO SYNOD LUTHER LEAGUE

to contribute to the support of indigents such as the school boys of the synod's Indian mission. To increase the circulation of the synod's periodicals, all guilds are enjoined to conduct campaigns for this purpose annually during the Lenten season.

The Joint Synod of Ohio and Other States in 1925 embraced a membership of 252,183 baptized souls in 720 congregations served by seven hundred active pastors in the United States and Canada. Two hundred and ninety-one, or 41.6 per cent, of these ministers then resided in cities of more than 5,000 population; fifty-two, or 7.4 per cent, in towns of 2,500 to 5,000 population; and 357, or 51.0 per cent, in villages of less than 2,500 people or in the open country.<sup>9</sup>

Young people's guilds in more than three hundred congregations in the Ohio Synod are affiliated with the General Luther League. Practically all of these societies are senior guilds numbering about ten thousand individuals. About sixty-two per cent of the churches with leagues today are situated in cities, seven per cent in towns, and thirty-one per cent in places of less than 2,500 population.<sup>10</sup> The league is supported by associate and annual membership dues and contributions. Special honorary, life, memorial, and sustaining memberships are establishing an endowment fund loaned to the synod for church-building purposes. The interest from this fund accrues to the league.

In the few years since its inception in 1923, corporate league work in the Ohio Synod has brought to the fore the aims and ideals of the young people in a manner which promises ever greater achievement in the years to come.

<sup>9</sup>Adapted from *Lutheran World Almanac*, 1924-1926, summary table, p. 218; and *ibid.*, geographical ministerial directory, pp. 141-180.

<sup>10</sup>Adapted from *ibid.*, pp. 141-180, and league directory.

## CHAPTER X

### OTHER LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S ORGANIZATIONS

The Walther League of the Synodical Conference; the Luther League of America of the United Lutheran Church; the Luther League of the Augustana Synod; the Wartburg League of the Iowa Synod; the Young People's Luther League of the Norwegian Lutheran Church; and the General Luther League of the Joint Ohio Synod—these six leagues make up the greater part of the Young People's Movement in the American Lutheran Church. A few other organizations merit mention.

The "Augustana Foreign Missionary Society," as a corollary to the Luther League of that synod, is made up largely of present and former students at Augustana College and Theological Seminary at Rock Island, Illinois. Here it was organized by twelve students on April 10, 1886. The first officers were Messrs. C. J. Bengston, president; J. A. Lundh, vice-president; A. Elfstrom, secretary; and A. G. Ander, treasurer.

Official recognition was accorded to the society by the college authorities in 1887, and while at first membership was limited to students, doors were opened in 1890 to pastors, professors, and laymen. Incorporation was effected on September 25, 1895.

*Spread Christianity  
Among Heathen*

From the start the avowed purpose has been to "promote the growth of the Kingdom of Christ among the heathen;"<sup>1</sup> to quicken missionary interest; and to aid the church's missions thru the synodical mission board. In 1889 this board solicited concern in the church's foreign mission fields, and by 1891 the or-

<sup>1</sup>*Bulletin, Augustana Foreign Missionary Society, p. 4.*

## OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEAGUES

ganization created an executive board to direct its affairs. The president of Augustana College and Theological Seminary is *ex officio* a member of this board.

The program on the campus includes the conducting of missionary study courses by the students; engaging of missionaries for lecture purposes on home fields; sponsoring of missionary conferences; and displaying of posters to keep before the student mind the challenge of missions.

The extension service of the society, felt thruout the synod, comprises maintenance of a traveling student lecturer, publication annually of a widely circulated *Missionary Calendar*, and preparation of an exhibit which depicts several phases of Christian work and is used by many churches during their mission festivals.

Another function lies in the financial aid given to the foreign missions of the Augustana Synod. In 1926, \$1,500 was presented to the mission in China; \$500 to Andhra Christian College, India; \$2,000 to the synodical mission in Africa; and \$150 to the Zion Society for Israel. The organization also supports mission enterprises in Japan, Persia, Porto Rico, and the Argentine.

About 3,700 members in the northern, western, and eastern states made up the society in 1927.

### *Promote Spiritual Life and Church Work*

The United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church comprises a young people's federation called the "Central Committee of Young People's Leagues." Founded in 1896, it grew by affiliation of guilds federated into districts which now number eight: Atlantic, Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, and Pacific. The Atlantic league was the first to organize; the Nebraska league, last. National membership in 1925 included 3,800 young people in 190 local societies. The proportion of league chapters to congregations is high, as there are but 212 congregations in the synod.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

The purpose of the organization, according to Pastor J. C. Peterson, of Fremont, Nebraska, president, is "to promote spiritual life in the church and to support the local congregation as well as synodical home and foreign missions."<sup>2</sup> Conventions are held annually. A topic system is used by the local guilds. Funds raised by the society for the church's missions have ranged from \$2,728 in 1920 to \$11,000 in 1925.

### *Oldest League Had Extensive Program*

An emigrant aid society established in the Trinity Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, Minnesota,

ta, in 1882, is thought to be the first young people's society organized within congregations now comprising the Lutheran Free Church. This guild reorganized in 1884 as a "Scandinavian Christian Young People's Society" (Skandinaviske Kristelige Ynglingeforening). Aiming to carry on home mission work among settlers in the newer parts of the city, this enterprising group of young people maintained its own workers and conducted two Sunday Schools—one in North Minneapolis, another in South Minneapolis. Meetings were held in a building situated on one of the principal streets of the city and owned by the society. A library and reading room featured the building. The organization disbanded in 1897.

Soon after the synod was organized at Minneapolis in 1897, young people's guilds sprang up in many congregations. Within a few years a district federation was established in the Willmar, Minnesota, synodical district.

### *Seek Federation in 1906*

Interest in synodical union of young people's societies was quickened in 1906, when the synod by resolution in annual meeting enjoined pastors and congregations "to consider whether organized young people's work be not timely and urgent."<sup>3</sup> The English

<sup>2</sup>Personal correspondence.

<sup>3</sup>*Lutheran Free Church Messenger*, Vol. X, No. 5, p. 1, May 15, 1927.

## OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEAGUES

Conference of the Lutheran Free Church, established in the same year, at once elected a "Committee of Young People's Work," comprising Pastor O. H. Sletten, then of Blanchardville, Wisconsin; Professor H. N. Hendrickson, of Augsburg College, Minneapolis; and Pastor O. L. Torvik, of Morris, Minnesota.

Two sectional conferences for young people were held under the leadership of this committee in 1906, and three in 1907. A constitution was drafted to form a "Young People's Union of the Lutheran Free Church." This was approved by the English Conference in 1910. Disagreement as to the form of organization, however, resulted in disunion.

Another unsuccessful attempt to unite all societies synodically was made in 1915. Meanwhile, district leagues grew apace, with annual conventions in almost every synodical district.

### *Synodical Approval Hastens Union*

"After five years of dormancy," wrote Pastor J. A. Houkom, of Blanchardville, president of the "Young People's Federation" in 1927, "the idea of a general federation of local young people's societies within the Lutheran Free Church again came to life."<sup>4</sup> Upon authorization from the synod the first convention of this federation was held in St. Olaf's Church, Minneapolis, November 12-14, 1920. The motto adopted was "Our Young People for Christ and His Church." First officers were:

Pastor C. J. Carlson, Wanamingo, Minnesota, president;  
Mr. J. T. Quanbeck, McVille, North Dakota, vice-president;  
Mr. Bernard Helland, Minneapolis, Minnesota, secretary;  
Miss Lydia Brude, Minneapolis, treasurer.

The union now embraces five thousand members in ninety-one societies constituting eighteen district leagues. Conventions are held annually. The objects, according to the constitution, are:

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 2.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

- "1. To bring young people to Christ.
- "2. To promote and foster a true Christian spirit and fellowship, so that those who are Christ's may grow in His grace and knowledge.
- "3. To help the young people to find their places of service in the Kingdom of God.
- "4. To work for the spreading of God's Kingdom, and to support such Christian activities as may from time to time be designated by the federation."<sup>5</sup>

Corporate activities of the league include the support of the *Lutheran Free Church Messenger* and the publishing of tracts. In 1927 the federation in a campaign won eight hundred new subscribers for this English organ of the synod.

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The Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church comprises a "Danish United Young People's League" and a "Danish Children's Missionary Society." The latter organization was founded in 1918.

The Suomi Synod embraces a "Young People's Association." Eastern, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Michigan "Conferences" number seventy-five societies and 3,268 members.

## STUDENT ASSOCIATIONS

Perhaps a remote phase of the young people's movement in the American Lutheran Church is evidenced in the existence of the Lutheran student movement,<sup>6</sup> divided into two groups.

The "Lutheran Student Association of America," organized at Toledo, Ohio, May 9-11, 1922, in response to appeal from local and regional student groups founded but two years earlier, is designed to embrace "every Lutheran student on the campus of every institution of higher learning in America."<sup>7</sup> The association

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup>Distinguished from the Norwegian Lutheran Students' Union because the latter is confined to the educational institutions of one synod.

<sup>7</sup>*What It Is and What It Does*, p. 2.

## OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEAGUES

"endeavors to care for the spiritual and material welfare of Lutheran students at colleges and universities by helping to keep such students with the Church, by fostering Christian fellowship, and by affording a means whereby Lutheran students may consider and act upon their common problems in conformity with the common faith of the Lutheran Church of America."<sup>8</sup>

The national organization is controlled by a "National Council," which consists of elected advisors and of two delegates from each of six regions. This council, like regional conferences, meets annually.

A general conference is held every fourth year. At the first national convention, held at Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois, April 13-15, 1923, Mr. F. A. Schiotz, of St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota, was chosen president.

The second international conference, held at Madison, Wisconsin, in 1927, was the largest gathering of Lutheran students ever witnessed in America. The conference gave sufficient evidence that Lutheran youth is seriously concerned with the Church, and the deep and sympathetic interest of the Church in the welfare of student forces was manifested by the presence and participation in discussions of student pastors from a large number of representative institutions and many student secretaries of the boards of education of several general bodies.

### *Seek World-Lutheran Fellowship*

The international character of the conference was emphasized by the presence of delegates representing Canada, China, Japan, India, Scotland, Sweden, Finland, and Africa. The association voted to hold, if feasible, a "world Lutheran student conference at Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1929, to meet simultaneously with the second Lutheran world convention;" expressed the hope "that the Oriental Lutheran churches become autonomous as soon as possible, and that effective rep-

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<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

resentation by native Christians in missionary councils be given;" and went on record as entertaining "nothing but cordial feelings toward the Lutheran students of the Orient," and as dissociating itself from "any implications of the Asiatic immigration laws which may deny the Christian principle of the brotherhood of mankind."<sup>9</sup>

The association authorized the calling of a paid secretary as soon as there is sufficient income to warrant the step. It also referred to a special committee for study the conditions bearing upon the growing unity and ultimate union of the Lutheran bodies of America.

The *American Lutheran Student* is the official organ of the Lutheran Student Association of America. *Agenda* of the organization in 1927 included the raising, during the following four years, of a \$25,000 fund for the support of the Lutheran seminary at Leningrad, Russia; an India scholarship fund; promotion of intersynodical acquaintance and understanding; and organization of seminary students.

### *Synodical Conference Students Federate*

On August 13, 1925, a provisional "Lutheran Students' League of the Synodical Conference" was organized at Concordia Teachers' College, River Forest, Illinois. Here students, pastors, and workers representing ten of fourteen institutions where student work is being carried on by Synodical Conference bodies, voted to open the doors of membership to "students, ex-students, and alumni of any standard college or university who are communicant members in good standing of the Synodical Conference or under the pastoral care of a university pastor of the Synodical Conference."<sup>10</sup>

The object of this organization was "to promote the spiritual and material welfare of Lutheran students at colleges and universities by helping to keep such students

<sup>9</sup>*News Bulletin*, National Lutheran Council, pp. 2 and 3, C-378, January 6, 1927.

<sup>10</sup>*Lutheran Student*, II, No. 1, p. 8, November, 1925.

## OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE'S LEAGUES

with the Church; by fostering Christian spirit, good fellowship, and high scholastic standing; and by encouraging the establishment and maintenance of student centers wherever possible and necessary."<sup>11</sup>

The 1925 conference, by resolution, urged the Missouri Synod "to acknowledge student welfare work unreservedly as a part of the regular work to be carried on and supported by the districts."<sup>12</sup> It also expressed the wish for the appointment of a general student secretary, in emulation of other church bodies. To this end the conference memorialized the student welfare committee of the synod, present at the meeting, to bring the pressing need of nation-wide student work to the attention of the synod during the following delegate convention of that body.

The Missouri Synod, in delegate convention at St. Louis in 1926, resolved that a full-time student secretary be called. The student welfare committee, however, disbanded, and the provisional student league structure collapsed when, under an interpretation of the board of directors of the synod, the budget of the committee was limited to an amount which made it impossible to call a full-time secretary.

Now centerless, the student movement in Synodical Conference ranks continues on independent bases among a number of colleges and universities thruout the Middle West.

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<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

## CHAPTER XI

### REVIEW AND COMPARISON

A consideration of the age of the Young People's Movement in the American Lutheran Church forces the inquiry, "What have the young people's organizations done to meet their aims? Have they held the young men and women with the Church as their constitutions profess? Or have the efforts in behalf of the young people been of no avail?"

A review of achievements will help to answer these questions and to trace points of similarity among the several divisions of the movement.

#### *Points to Hospice Endeavor*

The Walther League, organized at Buffalo, New York,<sup>1</sup> and now in its thirty-fifth year, counts its hospice work (travelers' welfare) as one of its most outstanding endeavors. With an international secretary and a chain of hospice workers which includes central secretaries in more than 1,300 cities of the United States and Canada, as well as district hospice committees in every state in which the Synodical Conference is represented, the league and its constituency have done much to aid strangers and Lutheran travelers the country over and have directed thousands into Christian surroundings and to Lutheran services. Fourteen hospices, now chartered, have been opened within as many years, and ministers have been apprised of the removal of church members into their jurisdiction.

Fifteen foreign missionaries and native workers, thirteen native students, and twelve indigent students in 1927 were supported by seventeen districts and the league at large. The members of the league in 1921 also built Wheat Ridge Sanitarium at Denver, Colorado, at a cost of over \$250,000.

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<sup>1</sup>*Cf. supra*, pp. 18 ff.

## REVIEW AND COMPARISON

### *Educational Program Is Manifold*

Another endeavor is the educational program, with its emphasis on topics and systematic Bible study. The general program also includes summer conferences, with fourteen camps under way in 1927 and twenty-three planned for 1928; a slide bureau service with historical and informative material; a plan of religious topics, with a generous sprinkling of lectures by Lutheran speakers in lyceum tours; a correspondence study course; reading courses for juniors and seniors; and a digest of suggestions on social and recreational affairs for the individual society in city and country.

Much stress is laid on the league's international and district gatherings, as well as on zone rallies. Devotional and inspirational, these meetings count as high-water marks in the life of the league and of its members, who attend in large numbers. A two-week sight-seeing tour is arranged in connection with most international conventions.

The Walther League in 1928 employed four full-time secretaries—executive, hospice, educational, and summer camp. It deputes all of its work from its national headquarters. Provision has also been made for the reappointment of a full-time junior secretary. Granting membership to individual guilds by charter, the organization is financially strong and is loyally supported by its members.

The *Walther League Messenger*, official organ, is counted effective as a cementing power among its 30,000 readers. Ever since the founding of the league this monthly has stood by with information and advice on the problems of the day. A corollary, the *Concordia Junior Messenger*, circulates among 18,000 younger leaguers.

### *Fosters Bible Study*

Education, missions, and life service constitute the threefold objective of the Luther League of America,<sup>2</sup> founded at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in

<sup>2</sup>Cf. *supra*, pp. 41 ff.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

1895. Bible study is the mainstay of the educational endeavor. This aim is supplemented by a comprehensive topic system and a plan of social gatherings for the individual society.

The inner mission endeavor includes work by league members among settlement houses, seamen's missions, and prisons, as well as hospital visits. Several foreign missionaries are supported by league districts. The outstanding achievement of the life service department is that more than 2,000 young people have pledged themselves to life service in the Church. The *Luther League Review*, with its inspirational and devotional features and its appeal to head and heart, has helped much to create universal interest in the several programs of the league.

To aid in realizing its aims, three full-time secretaries are maintained by the Luther League of America: general, junior, and intermediate; as well as a regional secretary and part-time workers for missions and life service. Since a large proportion of the national membership is concentrated in the East, a few of the state Luther Leagues in that section also employ part-time or full-time executive secretaries in order to pursue the work intensively.

A recent achievement of the league was the founding of the administration building of Andhra Christian College in India. With a sustaining membership fund which has provided over \$21,000 for administrative purposes since its creation in 1922, and with an annual appropriation of \$5,000 from the treasury of the United Lutheran Church, the Luther League of America is firmly grounded financially.

While the Walther League and the Luther League of America have passed their thirtieth milestones, the Young People's Movement in most other Lutheran bodies has experienced a later rise.

## REVIEW AND COMPARISON

### *Christian Conference Outstanding Feature*

The Christian Conference is the most distinctive activity of the Augustana Synod Luther League,<sup>3</sup> which was established at Chicago, Illinois, in 1910 and reorganized in 1924. The event is counted most influential in inculcating Christian consciousness in the young people. The executive council of the league exercises advisory powers, and thru this body a biblical topic system is advocated for study in the individual societies. Tracts bearing on devotional and inspirational themes are published from time to time. One must look to the conferences, which maintain separate identity and are but loosely linked into a synodical league, and to the districts within the conference, to find evidences of the power of the Young People's Movement in shaping the ideals and ambitions of young men and women of the Augustana Synod.

### *Education Chief Aim*

The Wartburg League of the Iowa Synod<sup>4</sup> was founded at Dubuque, Iowa, in 1912 and reorganized in 1921. This federation of 5,300 members supports a medical mission in New Guinea and the church extention fund of the Iowa Synod. In coöperation with the synodical committee on young people's societies and Sunday Schools, the league enjoins a topic system devoted to Bible study and educational matters. Aid in the solution of practical church problems is another objective. All of the league's national conventions are held annually at Dubuque in connection with the Sunday School Teachers' Institute of the synod.

The Wartburg League is committed largely to educational policies. It takes first rank among Lutheran young people's leagues in its encouragement of systematic training of Sunday School workers. Many leaguers address

<sup>3</sup>*Cf. supra*, pp. 68 ff.

<sup>4</sup>*Cf. supra*, pp. 78 ff.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

themselves to this endeavor. Under the welding influence of the synodical committee, league and institute have become closely interrelated.

### *Student Work and Choral Union Its Great Concerns*

The Young People's Luther League of the Norwegian Lutheran Church,<sup>5</sup> organized at St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1917, and comprising three movements which had originated independently in the nineties and later, points to its Students' Union and its Choral Union among its most significant contributions to the young people's cause.

Established simultaneously with the league in 1917, the Lutheran Students' Union bids fair to become a most influential agency to keep the needs of youth before the minds of prospective ministers and teachers. Beginning with 1926, the league also has been giving systematic attention to work among Lutheran students attending state colleges and universities. This endeavor promises to become an outstanding feature of the league program.

The ministry of music, too, perhaps is given widest recognition in Norwegian Lutheran churches. As a medium of religious expression, the Choral Union, an auxiliary of the league, has brought to the fore the beauty of corporate song service in the Church.

Tho on a voluntary basis of contributions, the league is well grounded financially, maintaining an executive secretary and part-time educational and student secretaries. Junior work, with especial emphasis on boys' work, is a major objective. The educational endeavor is couched in a well-ordered topic system, with Bible studies foremost. Publication of an independent young people's magazine, to be issued as a monthly edition of the *Lutheran Church Herald*, has been authorized.

The Young People's Luther League maintains several foreign missionaries. Its conventions are the best-at-

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<sup>5</sup>*Cf. supra*, pp. 93 ff.

## REVIEW AND COMPARISON

tended gatherings of any young people's league in the Lutheran Church. The ten districts and ninety circuits, with their conventions and rallies, are strongly supported by the young people.

### *Raises \$60,000 for Chair of Bible*

The General Luther League of the Joint Synod of Ohio and Other States,<sup>6</sup> organized at Columbus, Ohio, in 1923, advocates employment of a topic system and provides a slide bureau service in pursuit of the educational activities of the member societies. The league now maintains a full-time secretary. It has raised among its members \$60,000 to endow a chair of Bible at Capital University, Columbus. A Lutheran Chautauqua at Lakeside, Ohio, and a vacation camp at Long Lake, Illinois, supplement the annual conventions in encouraging a spirit of devotion to the work of the Church. The *Luther League Worker*, a monthly periodical, is the official organ.

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Chapter XII<sup>7</sup> dwells on the causes of the Lutheran Young People's Movement and offers an evaluation. A cross section of the leagues concerned will suffice to introduce the chapter.

### *Local League Was First*

The late eighties and the nineties seem to have been the accepted years for a general youth-awakening in bodies Lutheran as well as non-Lutheran. In practically all Lutheran leagues, district federations of local associations heralded national organization. In all of the synods, however, the presence of separate congregational young people's societies long preceded both the appearance of district alliances and the recognition of their need. The Synodical Conference, indeed, witnessed the rise of a national movement before separate guilds

<sup>6</sup>Cf. *supra*, pp. 115 ff.  
<sup>7</sup>Cf. *infra*, pp. 139 ff.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

federated into scattered districts. Yet even here the Walther League, once organized at Buffalo, grew by affiliation of district leagues.

A glance at the constitutions of the various leagues reveals an universal aim to keep the young people loyal to the Church and to inculcate in them a spirit of Christian consciousness and of devotion to worthwhile tasks.

While goals are alike, diversity in matters of administration is patent among the national leagues. Where one organization is highly centralized and coördinates much of its work thru departmental business, another vests more responsibility in the district league and the local young people's society. Thus the unified program of one league is balanced by the varied methods manifest in another. And the wholesome spirit of enthusiasm and enterprise which marks the reception everywhere of national endeavors attests to the equality of advantage in either form of administration.

### *Local Group Is Pivotal*

The local young people's guild, however, as a matter of course, is counted the strongest link in the chain of organization in all Lutheran leagues. Here it is that the young people get together for devotional, educational, or social purposes. Here they are expected to learn the fundamental aims of their organization.

The national leagues have helped to raise the standard of literature prepared for Lutheran young people. Independently published, helpful house organs, spreading good cheer and carrying messages of Christian concern; handbooks for workers; topic quarterlies; hymnals and devotional matter for young people's meetings; and promotional and departmental literature—all have been issued in large number.

The discovery of many consecrated lay workers in league and church must be credited in part to the influence of such literature. And while there is room for a far wider acceptance of synodical league publications,

## REVIEW AND COMPARISON

with their programs, enterprises, and suggestions, among local societies generally, much has already been accomplished, and there is promise of progress in yet greater measure.

### *Emphasis on Bible Is Universal*

A common thread coursing thru the established program of every league is the emphasis on systematic Bible study. All the league organizations offer a topic system to aid in providing thought-challenging discussion in the local meeting. While bearing often on foreign mission enterprises and on practical problems of church or even community, these topic systems, too, resolve themselves largely into an endeavor to "search the Scriptures."

All leagues have rallied liberally to requests for financial support of synodical enterprises and to sundry appeals for help. What is more, the Young People's Movement has helped to break down barriers within and among synods. Witness the threefold merger of eastern and southern synods which combined in 1918 to become the United Lutheran Church in America. This union is in itself a recognition in part of the influence of the Young People's Movement in shaping destinies and in enhancing mutual understanding.

The ages of eighteen to twenty-five perhaps constitute the normal range in the senior societies. Where junior leagues exist, these are commonly made up of boys and girls just confirmed or in preparation for confirmation, and approaching the ages of sixteen to eighteen. The Luther League of America is the only organization which has gone a step farther in preparing its members for parish citizenship. This federation calls its pre-senior chapters "intermediate leagues." Its junior leagues take in boys and girls eight to twelve years old, divided according to sex.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

### *Members*

### *Now Younger*

It is possible that, thirty or thirty-five years ago, societies were made up of somewhat older young people; but it must also be remembered that when the young people's movement started among Lutheran bodies, it was composed chiefly of associations of young men.

None of the Lutheran young people's leagues requires a pledge of its members as do the Baptist Young People's Union, the Brotherhood of St. Andrew, the Christian Endeavor, and other denominational leagues. It is felt that a pledge is not essential to allegiance to the cause.

## CHAPTER XII

### CAUSE AND APPRAISAL

#### THE PIONEER SOCIETIES

The Young People's Movement in the American Lutheran Church now is well established. Thirty-five years of development have proved its merit. Both local guild and national league have found their places in the economy of many of the parishes and of the Church at large.

Dr. Walther's Young Men's Association, established in the Trinity Lutheran Church, St. Louis, Missouri, in 1854,<sup>1</sup> and Dr. Reimensnyder's Young People's Religious Society, organized in Lewistown, Pennsylvania, in 1875,<sup>2</sup> have been observed. Doubtless the influence of these pioneer groups served to shape the programs and policies of many young people's guilds which sprang up independently in most Lutheran synods during the score of years preceding 1900. Yet the immediate cause of their emergence must be laid to the existence of a strong movement in other denominations, — notably the United Society of Christian Endeavor and the Epworth League. The latter movement, confined to the Methodist Episcopal Church, was established in 1889.

Frank Otis Erb, student of the Young People's Movement in the Christian Church at large in America, writes that

"in 1848 there was a young people's society in the First Baptist Church of Rochester, New York. . . . The records of the Strong Place Baptist Church of Brooklyn show that a young people's prayer meeting was held there on February 17, 1853, and thereafter. The Tabernacle Baptist Church of Philadelphia organized a young men's association on February 21, 1859; on May 7, 1860, it be-

<sup>1</sup>*Cf. supra*, pp. 18 and 19.

<sup>2</sup>*Cf. supra*, pp. 41 and 42.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

came a young people's association, and women were included."<sup>3</sup>

Singing schools, temperance societies, young people's Bible classes, congregational and denominational young people's missionary societies, and young people's devotional guilds, as well as the Young Men's Christian Association, according to Erb, had preceded the appearance of these Baptist groups.

Dr. Francis E. Clark, who founded the first Christian Endeavor society in the Williston Congregational Church of Portland, Maine, on February 2, 1881, states that in the following year seven societies were known to exist; in 1883, fifty-six; 1884, 156. The organization, as today, was interdenominational. In 1886 eight denominations, thirty-three states, and seven foreign countries embraced 850 member societies, all bearing the name of "Christian Endeavor." By 1887 individual membership numbered nearly 500,000 young men and women in more than 7,000 guilds.<sup>4</sup>

### *Credits Power of Prayer*

Speaking of the cause of this movement and of its phenomenal spread, Clark asserts, "The

Christian Endeavor movement seems to have been born in a day; it was really the result of a century of care and thought and prayer for the young."<sup>5</sup>

Dr. Clark had drawn inspiration from a successful prototype in the young people's meetings held at the Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church, Brooklyn, New York. With encouragement from the pastor, Dr. Theodore L. Cuyler,<sup>6</sup> a young people's league had begun as a weekly prayer-meeting on September 24, 1860, growing into a well-planned young people's association by November 6, 1867. This society patterned its program after the orig-

<sup>3</sup>Erb, *Development of the Young People's Movement*, p. 48.

<sup>4</sup>Clark, *Christian Endeavor in All Lands*. Quoted in Erb, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

<sup>5</sup>Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 296. Quoted in Erb, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>6</sup>One of Presbyterianism's most eminent divines a half century ago.

inal Young Men's Christian Association, founded by George Williams in London in 1844.<sup>7</sup>

"This society," writes Erb of the Lafayette Avenue Young People's Association, "with its devotional meeting as its central function; with its constitution, committee work, and social functions; and with its watchword, 'Young people for young people,' became the starting-point for many young people's associations all over the country."<sup>8</sup>

*Walther Is Earliest  
Lutheran Pioneer*

Dr. Walther with his Young Men's Association,<sup>9</sup> however, merits the distinction of founding the first permanent congregational society in the American Lutheran Church, while Dr. Reimensnyder's venture,<sup>10</sup> the morning star of the Luther League of America, must be regarded as the first synodical young people's association to grow into an alliance later absorbed by a national movement.

It is safe to assume that, outside the spheres of influence of the Young Men's Association of the Trinity Lutheran Church and the Young People's Religious Society of the Lewistown Lutheran Church, both the Young People's Association of the Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church and the Christian Endeavor Society of the Williston Congregational Church were forerunners of large numbers of young people's guilds in the Lutheran Church. But even tho the Lutheran Young People's Movement was patterned largely after these pioneer endeavors, one must look for another, deeper reason.

THE REAL CAUSE

In the last analysis the Young People's Movement—whether within or without the Lutheran Church—has its origin in the foresight of a devoted leadership as well

<sup>7</sup>Erb, *op. cit.*, pp. 28 and 37.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. *supra*, pp. 18 and 19.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. *supra*, pp. 41 and 42.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

as in certain peculiarities of human nature. Youth, vibrant with life, craves expression. Particularly in the formative years, the period of adolescence, are young people likely to chafe under a yoke of repression. And youth's spirit, seeking vent, may find egress in ways un-sanctioned by the Church.

### *Confirmation Not an End*

It was a protracted yet genuine awakening among clergy and laity which prompted a welcome to the Young People's Movement among Lutheran congregations in the eighties and nineties, when the movement first took root and flourished. The feeling grew that the Church hardly was facing the problem of religious education. As Pastor P. G. Prokopy, executive secretary of the Walther League, expressed it in defending the young people's cause in 1923,

"There seems to be a gap between the time of confirmation and the senior age, and yet there is no real reason why the Christian training and education which was begun in the parochial school or Sunday School, and which was broadened in confirmation instruction, should not be continued and enlarged to meet the growing understanding and intelligence of the young people who, as they go into the world and follow their callings, are called upon again and again to speak for their church."<sup>11</sup>

Similar sentiment has often prompted leaders everywhere to justify the presence and purpose of the young people's societies.

### *Aims Were Alike*

Early constitutions of the national movements proposed to keep the young people with the Church, specifically, the local congregation; to preserve them from evil influences; to bridge the period from confirmation to adult membership; to knit local guilds into district units, and districts into national leagues; and to quicken interest in congregational life thru frequent educational meetings and social gatherings.

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<sup>11</sup>Kretzmann, *Knowing and Doing*, foreword, p. 3.

## CAUSE AND APPRAISAL

Remarks appearing in the *Walther League Messenger* in 1917 justify this desire for entertainment which found expression in the early days:

"Organized social intercourse between the younger members is indispensable to their future welfare. Youth seeks companionship and pleasure, and if this inclination is led into proper channels, the danger of estrangement from the Church is considerably lessened, inasmuch as a proper substitute for corruptive companionship and unwholesome amusement removes many temptations."<sup>12</sup>

### *America Was Changing*

Is it any wonder that the first real youth awakening came forty and more years ago—and simultaneously in all Christian denominations?

It arose after all America had experienced rapid advance in the material world. Large scale factory production had supplanted a lesser industrial system. With the homesteading of the Middle Border, occasioned largely by the advent of the railroad, the breaking plow, and the self-binder, agriculture had developed in unexpected proportions. And improvements in the arteries of transport and travel had helped to usher in new tides of immigration which swelled the ranks of population.

As in other epochs of material advance in the civilized world, the Church was prone to suffer. The young people's movement now loomed as a possible medium, hitherto quiescent, to prepare young men and women for better parish citizenship. In all fairness, credit must be accorded to Drs. Walther, Cuyler, Clark, and Reimensnyder for launching the movement and for hastening its rise.

### ATTITUDE OF CLERGY

While an appreciable proportion of ministers and church boards warmly welcomed the Young People's Movement in the American Lutheran Church and looked to it as a godsend for the future, many assumed an at-

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<sup>12</sup>*Walther League Messenger*, XXV, No. 11-12, pp. 373-374, June and July, 1917.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

titude of neutral tolerance. Tradition confirms the feeling that the majority were hostile to the innovation.

The history of the Young People's Movement among Lutheran bodies is a record of up-hill struggle for discovery and acceptance. Churchmen on all sides attest to the reality of the effort. From the beginning, plans often were thwarted. Misgivings flourished as to the outcome of a meritless scheme and of the youth committed to its cause. Lacking precedent, church leaders looked askance at attempts toward self-expression, suppressing often the endeavors of young people to voice concerted interest in the work of the Church and thus to assert their spirituality. With unconcern in the saddle, defense of the movement was at a premium, in spite of repeated warnings to avoid the companionship of other Christian young people's communions, whither many young Lutherans had drifted in their quest of activity. It was feared, too, that the movement, once well organized, might overreach synodical control and lead to consequences quite out of keeping with the aims and ideals of both Church and league.

Not often has the Church been ready to accord full consideration to the problem of holding the young people. Too often and too long has synodical officialdom been fraught with neglect financially, and visions of an enlightened Lutheran lay consciousness have been obscured under a cloud of doubt as to the value of league work.

Carrying the situation as it obtained thirty and more years ago into the present, one is forced to the conviction that, despite exceptional and significant evidence to the contrary, church leaders have lacked that clear insight into the problems of youth which would spur them on to shelter the young people, the Church of the morrow. Time and again the presence of young people's societies has been protested as a symptom of imperfect conditions in congregational life—and today much clerical sentiment runs in a similar vein.

## CAUSE AND APPRAISAL

### *It Is Much the Same Today*

Even today unconcern is rife. While the Christian Endeavor and similar movements long since have been accepted and are quite generally encouraged among other denominations, and while these organizations enjoy established places in the economy of parish and church at large, the situation in the Lutheran Church presents a different view.

Even today there is too little coöperation between church and league. It has been stated that "the church which does more for its youth before confirmation than any other church, does less, officially, than other denominations during the dangerous age that follows confirmation."<sup>13</sup>

A few synods have not yet officially advocated support of the organized league movement and offer no young people's program. One large synod has tabled its corporate student work. The long discredited principle of repression, too, still finds harbor in not a few synodical households. While some synods, thru committees on junior work, are speeding the day when systematic attention can be given to the needs of young boys and girls and to the proper direction of their energies and activities, other synods have shown a tendency to discountenance the Boy Scout movement and similar organizations, without providing an adequate substitute.

League officials, too, complain of a marked attitude of clerical neglect. "We have made repeated efforts," writes one statistician, "to obtain information by writing directly to the ministers of each of our congregations, and we have not been able to obtain a complete report."<sup>14</sup> And one league secretary asserts, "It has always been one of our greatest problems to get an up-to-date file of the young people's societies of our church. Our pastors have not yet learned to see the great importance of furnishing us with such records."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup>*American Lutheran*, VIII, No. 6, p. 62, June, 1925.

<sup>14</sup>Personal correspondence.

<sup>15</sup>Personal correspondence.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

### *Synod and Press*

### *Approve*

It would be unfair to close this criticism without calling attention to the whole-hearted support which most of the Lutheran synods have officially granted to the league idea, at least in principle, and to the repeated notes of approval from the Lutheran press.

Even the early Lutheran pioneers in America called the young people their greatest mission field. And the foremost champion of a consecrated youth was Dr. Walther, the father of the Synodical Conference. Seventy-five years ago, this sage frankly encouraged the organization of young men's societies, remarking that

"the sweetest period of our life is without doubt the time of childhood and youth. As spring, with its fragrant showers and buds and its mild sunshine, is the most pleasing among the four seasons, so are childhood and youth the most pleasing of all ages thru which man passes in this life."<sup>16</sup>

## TRIUMPH OF MOVEMENT

The Young People's Movement in the American Lutheran Church has gone thru the trying fire of misgiving and hostile attitude on the part of a large proportion of clergy and older laity. It has emerged a refined vessel, "sanctified, and meet for the Master's use."<sup>17</sup> Is it any wonder that the movement, with its 5,500 congregational societies, integrated into national leagues, has developed into the present extensive systems? From a meager beginning forty years ago it has grown to large proportions and to unexpected measures of usefulness. Youth has found expression for its once latent spirit in the activities of a well-ordered league program—both local and national—and the achievements of the synodical leagues attest to their worth. With its avowed aim to protect youth and to fit young people for service to the Church, the movement has become the answer to an outcry of demands religious as well as social.

<sup>16</sup>Walther League Messenger, XXVII, No. 12, p. 390, July, 1919.  
MII Tim. 2, 21.

## CAUSE AND APPRAISAL

### *The Church, Too, Is Human*

The fact that many young people's societies began to flourish in the late eighties and in the nineties, when social change was rife, is but another reason why the Church, tho a divine institution, must adjust itself to social demands. More pliable than the parent body, the young people's organization has helped to bridge the gap between confirmation and maturity. And the most eloquent plea for the differentiation of the congregational guild into junior and senior societies lies in the universal trait of human nature which demands expression according to its tastes.

The Young People's Movement struck root in fertile soil. Realizing now the early aims of the leagues, it is bearing fruit in abundance. "It is my own,"—this feeling underlies the popular support of foreign missions and missionaries,—an endeavor which signalizes anew the growing interest which young men and women show in the work of the Church, when once their thoughts are turned to worthwhile tasks.

### *Domestic Movement Is Church-born*

The Young People's Movement is not a youth movement in the commonly accepted sense of the term. Contrasted to the movement abroad, which is largely a post-war rebellion against the existing economic, social, and religious orders, the young people's leagues in the American Lutheran Church, like their counterpart in other denominations, present a movement arising from within the Church.

"God preserve His Church," wrote Pastor Adolph Haentzschel, Lutheran student pastor at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in 1926,

"from any youth movement that is not based on the Word of God, that does not know the power of His Holy Spirit, that does not recognize and confess Jesus as the Son of God and the only Redeemer of men, and that aims at a reinterpretation of religion in materialistic and naturalistic terms.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

"There is, however, much room in the Church for a movement that seeks for a closer and more intimate fellowship with Christ, a fuller measure of light from the eternal Word, a deeper trust in the redemption won for us on the cross, a more pervading realization of the sonship of God thru Christ, a more fervent consecration of life to the service of God and men. Such a movement will draw on His Word and on prayer as the only fountains of spiritual light and strength."<sup>18</sup>

And in the same year Pastor Conrad Bergendoff, of Chicago, Illinois, president of the Augustana Synod Luther League Council, declared:

"The league movement has been not only a movement by the young people, but almost as much an undertaking for youth. Pastors old and young, and laymen whose youth is not measured in terms of years, have developed the league from the beginning."<sup>19</sup>

### *Leaders Not Lacking*

From the earliest years devoted leaders were chosen from clergy and congregation alike.

These leaders sought primarily to emancipate the young people from the danger of drifting into estranging alliances and to keep them within the fold. This has been accomplished in large measure.

Bible study has been stimulated universally. Missionary zeal has been quickened, and devoted men and women have been sent to foreign fields. Lutheran travelers have been directed. Institutions of mercy have been built, and indigent students supported. Study of church history has been revived. The desire for higher education has been encouraged. Young men and women have been brought face to face with practical problems attaching to church work. Social life in the congregation has become more manifest.

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<sup>18</sup>*Lutheran Student*, II, No. 2 and 3, p. 23, Jan.-March, 1926.

<sup>19</sup>Personal correspondence.

## CAUSE AND APPRAISAL

*Press and Forum  
Enlighten and Unify*

The inspiration gained at annual zone, district, and national conventions, the encouragement given to the young people's cause by church and league publications, and the increasing work of executive, departmental, and field secretaries—all these must be held responsible for the strong national federations today. Conventions and rallies offer opportunity for acquaintance with inspiring personalities and help to widen the spiritual and mental horizon of thousands of young people, while the penetrant press serves to unify endeavors and ideals in each league.

To the topic system, sponsored by all Lutheran leagues, goes the credit for raising the character of the young people's meeting to higher and higher standards of excellence. As in early days, many guilds today magnify the social phase to the wane of higher league endeavors. Where, however, the biblical and educational topics have been employed regularly, marked religious tendencies have relegated to minor place the desire for entertainment. It is maintained that the mere reading of topic literature has done much to keep young people interested where natural leaders are at a premium.<sup>20</sup>

## AN ESTIMATE

It is a comparatively simple task to record the material and numerical progress of the young people's leagues. To fathom the spiritual values attaching to their efforts is another matter. Erb concludes that "the young people's society has performed an invaluable service to the world in bringing young people together in two ways: viz., association and coöperation."<sup>21</sup> This discovery, while enlightening, does not satisfy as an evaluation final or complete.

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<sup>20</sup>Minutes, 1923 Annual Convention, Norwegian Lutheran Church, p. 882.

<sup>21</sup>Erb, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

### *Embraces Threefold Aim*

The Young People's Movement, it was found, took root in a desire of human nature to seek expression, and in the endeavor of an intelligent leadership to shelter the youth and to prepare them for the morrow. A study of the movement and of the things brought to light now leads to the conclusion that the young people's guild, as a vigorous arm of the Church, is but another useful agency to bring young men and women into closer fellowship with Christ their King, to fit them for greater service to the Church, and to establish more wholesome relationships among mankind thru deeds of love prompted by Christian thoughtfulness.

With its manifold endeavors and its many accomplishments, the Young People's Movement in the American Lutheran Church aims to develop among its 230,000 members a strong lay consciousness. The spirit of regenerate youth is liberated for service in the Kingdom. And while many societies still seem lifeless and need quickening, nevertheless the spiritual aim to date has gained over the social endeavor in the typical young people's guild.

In its present state the movement fulfils the hopes of an earlier day. It bids fair to make more and more young people today the intelligent church workers of tomorrow.

### *Guard Against Ever-present Danger*

A note of warning may not be amiss. The present arrangements of local; zone or circuit; district, conference, or state; and national leagues, conforming to synodical divisions, represent organizations built for convenience and designed to promote efficiency and to expedite affairs of administration.<sup>22</sup>

As in any organization, the tendency may eventually

<sup>22</sup>That there are many young people's societies in the Lutheran Church not yet affiliated with any organized league is shown by repeated efforts of leagues to include these in their fold. Just how numerous such unattached societies are is not known, both as to independent local guilds and sectional federations.

be toward abortive institutionalism, becoming soon a burden to the rank and file and defeating the purpose of the league. While there seems to be very little danger of this possibility in any of the Lutheran leagues today, nevertheless it might well be kept in mind. The passion for improvement should possess every society. The United Society of Christian Endeavor has suffered from a misunderstanding of the circumstance, men having taken it for granted in the past that the young people existed for the institution, rather than the reverse.<sup>23</sup>

The Young People's Movement is pledged to perpetuity no more than synodical organization is necessarily assured of unbroken continuance. For the present,—and for a long time to come, it is reasonable to expect,—Luther, Walther, and Wartburg leagues will continue to educate the young people and to build intelligent Lutheranism for the morrow. But there is no assurance that the league movement will continue thru all time. Movements rise and fall; their cycles may or may not repeat. Eventually they reach their meridian. Other needs may arise with the times and call for another technique. Evangelical Christianity holds that home, church, and state are the only divinely appointed permanent institutions.

*Pragmatic Test  
Is Final*

The final test of young people's work is the pragmatic test: does the movement serve the cause of Christ, and do the fruits of its endeavors build for the Larger Parish? Surely the highest motive is to enthrone the all-embracing love of Christ in the hearts of young men and women—and life's Apriltide presents the choicest time, for it offers the more receptive heart. The history of the league movement has ever attested this ideal.

#### THE FUTURE OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S WORK

Will the young people of any generation meet the many-sided challenge of the morrow and prepare for that

<sup>23</sup>*Cf. Erb, op. cit., pp. 106-118.*

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

future? The league movement seems to be the answer. It has built for the Kingdom. It has proved strong enough to withstand and counteract so-called modern youth tendencies, and influential enough to turn young people away from a host of vagaries. It has manifested its value to the parent church in unmistakable ways.

Yet the Young People's Movement must ever seek improvement,—and here the local guild is the crux of the matter. Merely to belong to a large organization brings no enduring advantage. Rather must the success and spirit of corporate league work pervade the entire organization and touch the individual and his congregational young people's society, for the movement cannot rise above the level of its members.<sup>24</sup>

The junior guild must be pressed into service universally if the young people are to be kept within the congregational fold from the time of confirmation. And again, it is only reasonable to expect that the older young people, having overreached the age of the league group, should carry thru life an abiding interest in youth—an interest which will encourage and assist a movement which has added to their spiritual and social welfare.<sup>25</sup>

### *Tested Leadership the Crying Need*

The great need thruout the Lutheran Young People's Movement today is for a matured, tested, and consecrated leadership—a leadership which seeks to understand the psychology of adolescence; which keeps rank and file acquainted with the work and progress of the national league; and which finds channels for youth expression and awakens in each member effectual desire to fill his niche. However acceptable their offices, ministers should be relieved of this task, and the burden properly should rest on lay members.<sup>26</sup>

To attain this end of insuring competent leadership for

<sup>24</sup>A shaking down of lifeless societies would do much to raise the standard of efficiency in every synodical league.

<sup>25</sup>The granting of associate memberships, as practised by several Lutheran leagues, is a step in this direction.

<sup>26</sup>It is likely that older, married people make the better leaders.

## CAUSE AND APPRAISAL

the local guild, educational and recreational institutes might well be established everywhere for the training of league workers; struggling societies, particularly in the country, must be put on their feet; and worthwhile projects must not be hampered by lack of sufficient funds.

There is much of value, too, in the program of each of the synodical league organizations, which might be copied by the other leagues. Student work, the hospice endeavor, life service in the Church, coördination of Sunday School and league work, the summer conference, the convention pageant—these typical phases still are limited largely to single federations; they could well find place in the economy of every league. A separate house organ is the ideal, and chartering of local societies would make for convenience in the administration of every league endeavor.

## RELATION OF MOVEMENT TO CHURCH

Thru the years church and league have become unavoidably interdependent. Tho the Church is parent, she must look to the young people and their organization as her hope for the future, for the young people of today are the Church of tomorrow. The much-vaunted responsibility of young people to their Church therefore be-speaks a counter-duty on the part of that Church to her charges.

### *Reasons Are Legion*

There is impelling reason for a definite, systematic, well-supported, and consecrated piece of work among the young people of the American Lutheran Church. Other communions long ago have recognized their obligations in this respect and have included young people's work in their programs of religious education.

The fact that 3,900 congregations with accredited league chapters in five major synods in 1925 represented only thirty-one per cent<sup>27</sup> of the churches in those synods

<sup>27</sup>Adapted from official league statistics and *Lutheran World Almanac*, 1924-1926, pp. 141-180.

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

leads to the conclusion that, by and large, two-thirds of the Lutheran Church is not represented in the organized league movement. With 230,000 members in the leagues, it is likely that there still are several hundred thousand young Lutherans<sup>28</sup> without the advantage of systematic Bible study and without the engaging interest of the many other worthwhile activities which league work fosters.

Is there not room for improvement here? Surely a movement which has become an integral part of the Church economy as has the Young People's Movement, and which has won the genuine admiration and generous support of large numbers of ministers and laymen, merits unreserved acceptance by every synod and deserves extension into every corner of the Larger Parish. The challenge is not met until the movement is established wherever there are enough young people to warrant organization.

### *The Hope of the Future*

"If middle adolescence holds the greatest possibility for good as well as for evil, as recent studies in the fields of religious experience and juvenile crime have revealed," said Dr. Martin Hegland of St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota, in his presidential report to the Young People's Luther League in convention at Seattle, Washington, in 1927, "then it is a fatal error to let this critical period pass without doing everything possible to help our young people."<sup>29</sup> And the strongest argument for renewed synodical approval and a growing financial support of the Young People's Movement is voiced in the increased spirituality which the movement fosters among its members. The alternative is patent,—loss of interest in church work on the part of the newly confirmed, with danger of eventual desertion from the Church.

That this "thorn in the flesh" might be rooted out is

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<sup>28</sup>The estimate of the number of young people in the American Lutheran Church may be placed roughly at 500,000.

<sup>29</sup>Christ First, Convention Yearbook, 1927, p. 179.

## CAUSE AND APPRAISAL

the hope of every Lutheran young people's league. The movement has been found to "hold fast that which is good."<sup>30</sup> As such need grows, the leagues may be called upon more and more to uphold evangelical Christianity. The movement therefore is worthy of the best thought in the Church. Let it engage the close and sympathetic attention of clerical and lay leaders in ever-growing measure.

There are many untouched opportunities for systematic and well-directed service to the Church and the Kingdom, and many tasks yet to be assumed; the movement has but made a beginning. Let the young people's leagues, therefore, do all in their power to use every just means in pursuit of their work, and let the Church stand by with moral and, where necessary, financial support.

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<sup>30</sup>I. *Thess.* 5, 21.



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# INDEX

- A
- Achievements, *see* Augustana Synod Luther League, General Luther League, Walther League, Wartburg League
- Achievements reviewed, 130-135
- Activities, *see* Augustana Synod Luther League, General Luther League, Luther League of America, Walther League, Wartburg League, Young People's Luther League
- Administration
- differences in, 136
- form of, *see* Augustana Luther League, Luther League of America, Walther League
- ideal in, 153
- see also* Organization, type of
- Adolescence
- a power, 154
- psychology of, 142, 152
- see also* General Luther League, Luther League of America, Walther League, Young People's Luther League
- Age
- of intermediate group, Luther League of America, 137
- of members, 137, 152
- see also* Luther League of America, Walther League, Young People's Luther League
- Agriculture, 143
- Aims, *see* Augustana Synod Luther League, General Luther League, Luther League of America, Walther League, Wartburg League, Young People's Luther League
- Albert Lea, Minn., Norwegian Synod organized, 14
- American Lutheran Publicity Bureau, 29
- Andhra Christian College, 61, 123
- Appraisal, *see* Augustana Synod Luther League, General Luther League, Luther League of America, Walther League, Wartburg League, Young People's Luther League
- Approval, synodical, argument for, 154
- see also* Synodical approval
- Association, a result of movement, 149
- Attitude, clerical, *see* Clergy, attitude of
- Augustana Foreign Missionary Society, 16, 74, 122-123
- Bengston, C. J., 122
- Augustana Synod, 16
- see also* Augustana Synod Luther League
- AUGUSTANA SYNOD LUTHER LEAGUE, 16, 68-77, 133
- achievements, 74, 75
- activities, 74-76, 133
- administration, form of, 73, 75, 133
- see also* organization, type of
- aims, 69, 72-74
- appraisal, 133
- approval, *see* recognition
- Augustana Foreign Missionary Society, 74, 122-123
- Augustana Luther League Council, *see* Synodical Luther League Council
- Augustana Luther Leaguer*, 74
- beginnings, 70-73
- Bible study, 75-77
- cause, 68-69
- Chicago, Ill.
- league organized, 72
- reorganized, 73
- synod approves league, 72, 76
- Christian Brotherhood, 74
- Christian Conference, 74, 133
- clergy, attitude of, 70-72
- committee on young people, *see* synodical committee on young people
- constitution, 72-73
- distribution of congregations, rural and urban, 76-77
- districts
- strength of, 75, 133
- activities of, 75
- early awakening, 68
- early efforts, 69
- educational endeavor, 74-76
- eighties, 68
- extent, 76
- federation
- district, 69-71
- synodical, 71-73
- fellowship movement, 76
- finances, 75-76
- first convention, 72
- first federation, 69
- first officers, 73

## INDEX

- first young people's society, 68  
influence, 76-77, 133  
institute movement, 76  
Kansas, first conference Luther  
League organized, 69  
leaders  
    Bergendoff, C., 73, 75, 148  
    Bergstrom, A. F., 71  
    Callerstrom, Marie, 73  
    Colseth, P., 68  
    Dorf, G. A., 73  
    Ekholm, J., 70  
    Engstrand, C. A., 69  
    Foss, C. W., 71  
    Hanson, F. V., 70  
    Helgren, J. S., 73  
    Hoffsten, C. E., 71  
    Hult, A., 71  
    Johns, C., 69  
    Nelson, F., 69, 70, 71, 73  
    Noyd, M., 71  
    Oden, J., 74  
    Peterson, Minnie, 73  
    Schön, A., 71  
    Swensson, C. A., 68  
    Youngcahl, G. E., 69  
literature, 76  
Luther League of America, relation to, 71  
*Lutheran Companion*, 74, 76  
lyceum bureaus, 75  
*Manual for Luther Leagues*, 73  
membership, 77  
mission endeavor, 75  
Moline, Ill., first young people's  
    society, 68  
movement
- B**
- Banker, W., quoted, 61  
Baptist young people's groups,  
    early, 139  
Baptist Young People's Union,  
    10, 138  
Beginnings, *see* Augustana Luther  
    League, General Luther  
    League, Luther League of  
    America, Walther League,  
    Wartburg League, Young Peo-  
    ple's Luther League  
Bergendoff, C., quoted, 73, 75, 148  
Bible  
    popularized, 3  
    quoted, 3, 67, 84, 120, 146, 155  
Bible study  
    common aim, 10  
    emphasis on, 137  
    stimulated, 148  
    *see also* Augustana Synod Luther  
        League, Luther League of  
        America, Walther League,  
        Wartburg League, Young Peo-  
        ple's Luther League  
Bieber, M. J., quoted, 46, 47  
Boy Scout movement, 63, 145  
Braddock, Penn., Slovak Synod or-  
    ganized, 14  
Brotherhood of St. Andrew, 9, 138  
Brunn, A., quoted, 23, 25  
Buffalo Synod organized, 14
- C**
- Calumet, Mich.  
    Finnish Apostolic Church organ-  
        ized, 18  
    Suomi Synod organized, 13  
Catholic Church, 4  
Catholic youth movement, 7  
Cause, *see* Augustana Synod Luther  
    League, Luther League of  
    America, Walther League,  
    Wartburg League, Young Peo-  
    ple's Luther League  
Central Committee of Young Peo-  
    ple's Leagues, 13, 123

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

- Centralization, *see* Federation  
Champions, *see* Luther League of America, Walther League, Wartburg League  
Chicago, Ill., Missouri Synod organized, 14  
China, youth movement in, 6  
Christ  
    concerned in youth, 3-4  
    cause of, 151  
    love of, 151  
Christian Endeavor, 8, 41-42, 188-141, 151  
Christianity, evangelical, upheld, 155  
Church  
    concern of, in young people, 155  
    dependence on young people, 154-155  
    future of, 154  
    human institution, 147  
    influenced by social needs, 147  
    problems, 148  
    recognition of movement by, 137  
    relation to, *see* General Luther League, Luther League of America, Walther League, Wartburg League, Young People's Luther League  
    service to, 154  
    traditional attitude of, 4  
Church and youth, mutual relation of, 4  
Clark, F. E., pioneer in young people's work, 8, 140, 143  
    quoted, 140  
Clergy, attitude of, 143-145  
    league officials quoted, 145  
    *see also* Augustana Synod Luther League, General Luther League, Luther League of America, Walther League, Wartburg League, Young People's Luther League.  
Clergy, concern of, in young people, 154-155  
Clinton, Wis., Augustana Synod organized, 16  
Commerce and industry, 143  
Committees on young people, *see* Synodical committees on young people  
Comparison of leagues, 130-135  
Conclusion, 149-150, 155  
Concord, N. C., United Synod of the South organized, 16  
Confirmation, 10, 142  
Confirmed young people, problem of, *see* Luther League of America, Walther League, Young People's Luther League  
Congregational Church, 8  
Constitutions compared, 136  
    *see also* Augustana Synod Luther League, General Luther League, Luther League of America, Walther League, Wartburg League, Young People's Luther League  
Conventions, influence of, 149  
Coöperation, a result of movement, 149  
Coöperation, church and league, 145  
    *see also* Synodical approval and coöperation  
Cross section of leagues, 135-138  
Cuyler, T. L., pioneer in young people's work, 140, 143
- D
- Da Feltre, Vittorino, 4  
Dallmann, W., quoted, 25  
Danish Children's Missionary Society, 126  
Danish Ev. Luth. Church, 12, 126  
Danish United Young People's League, 13, 126  
Disciples of Christ, 8  
Distribution of congregations and young people's societies, rural and urban, *see* Augustana Synod Luther League, General Luther League, Luther League of America, Walther League, Wartburg League, Young People's Luther League  
District federations, precedence over national organizations, 135  
Drifting, danger of, 148, 154.
- E
- Early awakening  
Early efforts  
Early movements  
    *see* Augustana Synod Luther League, Luther League of America, Walther League, Wartburg League, Young People's Luther League  
Early young people's federations, 18, 41, 140-141  
Early young people's societies, 18, 41, 139-141  
East Koshkonong, Wis., Synod of Norwegian Luth. Church organized, 15  
Eckert, W., quoted, 54  
Education, 3  
    higher, 148  
    modern, Luther's influence on, 4  
    popular, of young people, 8

## INDEX

- Educational endeavor, *see* Augustana Synod Luther League, General Luther League, Luther League of America, Walther League, Wartburg League, Young People's Luther League. Educational institutes, need for, 153
- Eielsen's Synod, organized, 15
- Eighties, 185, 142, 146  
*see also* Augustana Synod Luther League, Luther League of America, Walther League, Wartburg League, Young People's Luther League
- Endeavors, reception of, by young people's societies, 136
- Engelbrecht, E. H., quoted, 84
- England, youth movement in, 6
- Entertainment, *see* Social phase
- Epworth League, 9, 139
- Erb, F. O., quoted, 139, 149
- Estimate, *see* Appraisal
- Europe
- central, youth movement in, 6-7
  - eastern, youth movement in, 7
  - northern, youth movement in, 7-8
- Evangelical Association, 10
- Expansion, *see* Progress
- Extension, reasons for, 154
- Extent, *see* Augustana Synod Luther League, General Luther League, Luther League of America, Walther League, Wartburg League, Young People's Luther League
- F**
- Federation, *see* Augustana Synod Luther League, Luther League of America, Walther League, Wartburg League, Young People's Luther League.
- Finances, *see* Augustana Synod Luther League, General Luther League, Luther League of America, Walther League, Wartburg League, Young People's Luther League
- Finnish Apostolic Luth. Church, 13
- Finnish Ev. Luth. Church of America, 13
- Finnish Ev. Luth. National Church, 13
- First
- convention
  - federation
  - officers
  - young people's society  
*see* Augustana Synod Luther League, General Luther League, Luther League of
- America, Walther League, Wartburg League, Young People's Luther League
- First Lutheran young people's society, 19
- Foreign mission, *see* Mission endeavor
- France, youth movement in, 6-7
- Fritschel, T., quoted, 88, 90
- Funds, need of adequate, 153
- Future
- challenge of, 153-154
  - hope of, 154-155
  - tasks of, 155
- G**
- General Council, 16, 58  
*see also* Luther League of America
- GENERAL LUTHER LEAGUE OF JOINT SYNOD OF OHIO**, 14, 115-121, 135
- achievements, 118-121
  - activities, 118-121
  - adolescence, period of, 120
  - aims, 115-121
  - appraisal, 121
  - approval, 115
  - beginnings, 115
  - Bible, chair of, endowed, 118
  - Capital University, supported, 120
  - Chautauqua, 120
  - church, relation to, 116
  - circulation campaigns, 121
  - clergy, early attitude of, 116
  - Columbus, O., first convention, 115-117
  - confirmed young people, problem of, 120
  - constitution, 117
  - conventions, where held, 118
  - distribution of congregations, rural and urban, 121
  - distribution of young people's societies, rural and urban, 121
  - educational endeavor, 120
  - finances, 118, 120-121
  - first convention, Columbus, O., 115-117
  - first officers, 118
  - Grace Ev. Luth. Church, Columbus, O., 115
  - indigent students, support of, 121
  - influence, 121
  - Lakeside, O., Chautauqua, 120
  - leaders
  - Ahn, A. A., 118
  - Boehl, Grace, 118
  - Borgemeyer, C., 118
  - Golladay, R. E., 116
  - Koenreich, A. S., 118, 119

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

- Kuhlman, A. H., 115, 116, 118, 120  
Long, R. H., 120  
Meuser, C. T., 118  
Scheid, G. W., 118  
Schurmann, M., 118  
Tagge, Helen, 118  
library fund, 120  
lecture course, 120  
Long Lake, Ill., vacation camps, 120  
*Luther League Topics*, 119  
*Luther League Worker*, 118, 119  
membership, 121  
mission, Indian, 121  
mission endeavor, 117  
name, 117  
organ, official, 118  
organization, type of, 117  
press, influence of, 119  
progress, 118-121  
projects, 117-118  
recapitulation, 185  
recreation, 120  
resolutions, 117-118  
secretaryship, executive, 120  
service bureau, 120  
social phase, 119  
*Studies for Luther Leagues and Young People's Societies*, 117  
summer conference camps, 120  
topic system, 119  
vacation camps, 120  
General Synod, 16, 58  
*see also* Luther League of America.  
Germany, youth movement in, 6-7  
God, concerned in youth, 3-4  
Golladay, R. E., quoted, 116  
Graebner, A. L., quoted, 25  
Growth, *see* Progress  
Gruber, L. F., quoted, 52
- H
- Haentzschel, A., quoted, 147  
Hagerstown, Md., General Synod organized, 18  
Hallesby, O., quoted, 8  
Hauge's Norw. Ev. Luth. Synod, 15  
*see also* Young People's Luther League  
Haupt, A. J. D., quoted, 51  
Hegland, M., quoted, 114, 154  
High, S., quoted, 7  
Hodges, H., quoted, 56  
Home, church, and state, 151  
Home missions, *see* Mission endeavor  
Hospice work, 148, 153  
*see also* Walther League  
Houkom, J. A., quoted, 125
- House organs, influence of, 186, 149  
Human nature, factor in movement, 142
- I
- Icelandic Ev. Luth. Synod, 15  
Immigration, 12, 143  
Improvement as an ideal, 151-152  
India, youth movement in, 6-7  
Industrial advance, 143  
Influence, *see* Augustana Synod  
Luther League, General Luther League, Luther League of America, Walther League, Wartburg League, Young People's Luther League  
Inner Mission Young People's Societies, Norway, 8  
Institutionalism, danger of, 151  
Interdependence, church and league, 153-154  
International Peace Congress, 7  
Iowa Synod, 14  
*see also* Wartburg League  
Ironwood, Mich., Finnish National Church organized, 13  
Italy, 4
- J
- Japan, youth movement in, 6  
Jefferson Prairie, Wis., Eielsen's Synod organized, 15  
Jugendbewegung, 6  
Junior endeavor, *see* Luther League of America, Walther League, Wartburg League, Young People's Luther League  
Junior work essential, 152
- K
- Keystone League of Christian Endeavor, 10  
Kingdom of God enhanced, 150, 152, 154-155  
Koenreich, A. S., quoted, 119  
Korea, youth movement in, 6  
Kuhlman, A. H., quoted, 115-116  
Kuhns, L. M., quoted, 52
- L
- Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church (Cuyler's), Brooklyn, N. Y., 140-141  
Laity, concern of, 155  
La Jeune Republique, 6-7  
Language problem, 17  
*see also* Luther League of America, Walther League, Wartburg League, Young People's Luther League

## INDEX

- Latin America, youth movement in, 6
- Lay awakening, 4
- Lay consciousness, 150
- Lay organization, 5
- Lay responsibility, 5
- Lay workers discovered, 136
- Leaders, *see* Augustana Synod Luther League, General Luther League, Luther League of America, Walther League, Wartburg League, Young People's Luther League
- Leaders, married people as, 152
- Leadership
- influence of, 141, 150
  - need of, 152
  - type of, 148
- synodical recognition of, 37
- see also* Luther League of America, Walther League, Wartburg League, Young People's Luther League
- League workers, influence of, 148
- Leagues, synodical, interrelation of, 153
- Lewistown, Penn., Reimensnyder's Young People's Religious Society organized, 41, 139
- Lindemann, P., quoted, 37
- Literature, standard of, raised, 136
- Local guild
- importance of, 152
  - pivotal, 136
- Long, R. H., quoted, 120
- Losses, Lutheran, 10
- Luther
- champion of youth, 3-4
  - pioneer in education, 3
- LUTHER LEAGUE OF AMERICA, 17, 41-67, 131-132
- activities, 52-65
  - administration, form of, 132
  - adolescence, psychology of, met in intermediate league, 55
  - age
    - of members, 55
    - of movement, 132
  - aims, 49-66
  - Andhra Christian College, 61, 66
  - appraisal, 66-67
  - beginnings, 43-46
  - Bible schools, summer conference, 61
  - Bible study, 58, 61, 66
  - boys' work, 65
  - Buenos Aires, Argentina, 62
  - Canada Luther League admitted, 49
  - cause, 42, 43, 67
  - Central Association of Lutheran Young People's Associations
  - of City of New York, 43
  - champions, 41-48
- Chicago, Ill.
- 1908 convention, junior work encouraged, 54
  - 1924 synodical convention, 58
- Christian Endeavor, 41, 42
- church, relation to, 51-54, 58-59, 67
- clergy, attitude of, 44, 48
  - confirmed young people, problem of holding, 42, 50-51, 67
  - constitution, 47, 60
  - conventions biennial
    - location of, 49-50
    - spirit of, 50
  - deaconess endeavor, 53
  - distribution of congregations, rural and urban, 64
  - distribution of young people's societies, rural and urban, 64
  - early movements, 41-42
  - educational endeavor, 52-66
  - eighties, 48
  - emblem, 47
  - endeavors, threefold, 60
  - entertainment, *see* social phase
  - established, 46
  - extent, 59, 64
  - federation, 41-46
  - finances, 62-64, 132
  - first convention, 46
  - first federation, 41
  - First Lutheran Church, Pittsburgh, Pa., first convention, 46
  - first officers, 47
  - first state Luther League, 45
  - first young people's society, 41
  - foreign chapters, 58
  - forerunners, 41-46
  - Ft. Wayne, Ind.
    - 1920 convention, junior work solicited, 56
    - affiliate with synodical merger, 58-59  - General Council, 42, 48, 52, 58
  - General Synod, 42, 48, 58
  - influence, 51, 53, 66-67
  - inner mission endeavor, 58, 60, 61
  - intermediate endeavor, 55, 57
    - boys and girls divided, 55
  - intersynodical, early aims, 44, 46-49, 59
  - junior endeavor, 54-57
  - junior institutes, 57, 63
  - Junior Outlook*, 57
  - language problem, 52
  - leaders
    - Banker, W., 61, 62
    - Baugher, H. L., 47

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

- Bieber, M. J., 46, 47  
Carty, A. C., 65  
Eckert, W., 54  
Eckhardt, C., 48  
Ellert, E. F., 47  
Fischer, H., 62  
Frick, W. K., 48  
Geisinger, G., 47  
Gold, H. R., 52  
Gruber, L. F., 52  
Hartranft, F. A., 47, 48  
Haupt, A. J. D., 51  
Hodges, H., 56, 62  
Huber, F. T., 47  
Jones, G. M., 48  
Kuhns, L. M., 48, 51, 52, 53  
Mehlhouse, Brenda L., 56, 57  
Meister, Katharine, 48  
Michler, A. T., 55  
Miller, C. A., 50  
Miller, E. A., 67  
Moldehnke, E. F., 43, 47  
Munson, M. A., 49  
Murphy, J. L., 48  
Olson, M. C., 47  
Portz, C. A., 61  
Reimensnyder, J. M., 41, 42  
Schelle, H. F., 48  
Scherer, May, 61  
Staake, W. H., 47  
Stoever, W. C., 43, 47, 48, 54  
Teufel, C. M., 57  
Trautman, L., 48  
Traver, A. J., 62  
Trexler, J. F., 48  
Wedekind, A. C., 43  
Weiskotten, S. G., 48  
Wolf, R. J., 58  
leadership, 53-58, 66  
Lewistown, Pa., Luth. Church,  
first young people's society  
organized, 41  
life service endeavor, 60-66  
Light Brigade, 58  
literary endeavor, 52, 55, 63  
Luther Alliance of Susquehanna  
Conference and Synod, 41, 45  
Lutheran Brotherhood, 59  
Lutheran circulation campaign,  
63  
*Lutheran Herald*, quoted, 44  
*Luther League Review*  
launched, 43  
official organ, 47, 61, 182  
members, age of, 54  
membership, 50, 59, 64  
touchstone of, 46  
merger, synodical, 48, 58  
Milwaukee, Wis.,  
1925 convention, 60  
misgivings, 45, 48  
mission endeavor, 52-55, 60-63, 66  
foreign, 53  
motto, 47  
movement  
age of, 182  
rise of national, 46  
name, 45, 47  
New York City  
Central Association of, 43, 44  
focus of youth-awakening, 43  
Luther League of, 44  
United Lutheran Church orga-  
nized, 40, 59  
Young Men's Union of St.  
Peter's Church, 44  
New York State Luther League,  
first state league, 45  
nineties, 45  
objective, threefold, 60, 66  
organ, official, 47  
organization, type of, 54  
Orient, enterprise in, 53  
Philadelphia, Pa., national head-  
quarters, 64  
pioneers, 41-42  
Pittsburgh, Pa., first convention,  
46, 48  
Porto Rico, Luther League of,  
admitted, 49  
progress, 49-66  
reading course, 52, 55, 63  
recapitulation, 66, 182  
recognition, synodical, 58-59  
recreational phase, 65  
Reimensnyder, J. M., founder of  
first federation, 41-42  
rural problem, 65  
Salisbury, No. Car., 1927 conven-  
tion, 62-63  
secretaryships, 51, 56-62  
social phase, 65  
state leagues, established, 44-46  
student work, 52  
summer camp movement, 65  
summer conference Bible schools,  
61  
sustaining membership fund, 63  
synodical approval and coöpera-  
tion, 58-59  
synodical committee on young  
people, 58  
synodical committee on boys'  
work, 58, 65  
topic system, 52, 61  
*Topics Quarterly*, 61  
United Lutheran Church, 41, 47,  
49  
adopted by, 59  
league a factor in merging, 46,  
48, 59  
official young people's league  
of, 58, 59

## INDEX

- relation to, 58-59  
 United Synod of the South, 42,  
 49, 58  
 Utica, N. Y., first state Luther  
 League organized, 45  
 Walther League, 45  
 Washington, D. C.  
 league adopted by synod, 59  
 Women's Missionary Society, 58,  
 59  
 York, Pa., 1922 convention, 56-60  
 junior and intermediate work  
 enhanced, 56-57  
 Young People's Religious Society,  
 Lewistown, Pa., Lutheran  
 Church, 41  
 Lutheran Brethren, Church of the,  
 15  
 Lutheran Church  
 causes of divisions, 12  
 divisions in, 12-17  
 membership, 12  
 origin of membership, 12  
 Lutheran Church of Norway, 7-8  
 Lutheran Free Church, 15  
 Young People's Federation, 124-  
 126  
 Carlson, C. J., 125  
 committee on young people's  
 work, 125  
 disunion, 125  
 first officers, 125  
 Houkom, J. A., 125  
*Luth. Free Church Messenger*,  
 126  
 membership, 125  
 pioneer society, 124  
 revival, 125  
 Sletten, O. H., 125  
 spread of movement, 125  
 Lutheran Student Association of  
 America, 126-128  
 Lutheran Students' League, 128-129
- M
- Maier, W. A., quoted, 39  
 Married people as leaders, 152  
 Membership, *see* Augustana Synod  
 Luther League, General Luther  
 League, Luther League of  
 America, Walther League,  
 Wartburg League, Young Peo-  
 ple's Luther League.  
 Memberships, associate, 152  
 Merger  
 Norwegian Lutheran Church, 15,  
 96  
 United Lutheran Church, 16, 58-  
 59, 137  
 Methodist Episcopal Church, 9, 139  
 Michler, A. T., quoted, 55  
 Miller, C. A., quoted, 50
- Miller, E. A., quoted, 67  
 Milwaukee, Wis.  
 Synodical Conference organized,  
 14  
 Wisconsin Synod organized, 14  
 Misgivings, *see* Luther League of  
 America, Walther League  
 Mission endeavor, *see* Augustana  
 Synod Luther League, General  
 Luther League, Luther League  
 of America, Walther League,  
 Wartburg League, Young Peo-  
 ple's Luther League  
 Missions, foreign, interest in, 147,  
 148  
 Missouri Synod organized, 14  
*see also* Walther League  
 Modern youth, 152  
 Motto, *see* Luther League of Amer-  
 ica, Walther League, Wart-  
 burg, Young People's Luther  
 League  
 Mountain, N. D., Icelandic Synod  
 organized, 15  
 Munson, M. A., quoted, 49  
 Mutual relation, church and  
 league, *see* Church, relation to
- N
- Name, *see* Augustana Synod Lu-  
 ther League, General Luther  
 League, Luther League of  
 America, Walther League,  
 Wartburg League, Young Peo-  
 ple's Luther League  
 Neenah, Wis., Danish Ev. Lutheran  
 Church organized, 12  
 Nelson, F., quoted, 70-71  
 New York City  
 United Luth. Church organized,  
 16  
*see also* Luther League of Amer-  
 ica  
 Nineteenth century, 5, 11, 12  
 Nineties, 135, 142, 147  
*see also* Augustana Synod Lu-  
 ther League, Luther League of  
 America, Walther League,  
 Wartburg League, Young Peo-  
 ple's Luther League  
 Norway, youth movement in, 7-8  
 Norwegian Lutheran Church of  
 America, 15-16  
*see also* Young People's Luther  
 League  
 Norwegian Synod of the American  
 Ev. Luth. Church, 14  
*see also* Walther League  
 Number of Lutheran young people,  
 estimated, 154

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

- O  
Objective, *see* Aims  
Ohio Synod organized, 13-14  
    *see also* General Luther League  
Opportunity, challenge of, 154, 155  
Oppression, religious, 5  
Organ, official, *see* Augustana Synod  
Luther League, General Luther League, Luther League of America, Walther League, Wartburg League, Young People's Luther League  
Organization  
    as structure, 150  
    type of, *see* Augustana Synod  
    Luther League, General Luther League, Luther League of America, Young People's Luther League  
*see also* Administration, form of
- P  
Parochial school, 10  
Pestalozzi, 4  
Peterson, J., quoted, 102  
Peterson, J. C., quoted, 124  
Pfennig, H. W., quoted, 91  
Pieper, F., quoted, 29  
Pioneer endeavors, *see* Early efforts, Early movements  
Pioneer leaders, 139-141, 143  
    Clark, 8, 140-141, 143  
    Cuyler, 140, 143  
    Reimensnyder, 41-42, 139, 141, 143  
    Walther, 18-19, 139, 141, 143  
Pioneer young people's federations, 18-19, 41-42, 140-141  
Pioneer young people's societies, 139-141  
    Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church, Brooklyn, N. Y. (Cuyler), 140-141  
    Lewistown, Pa., Lutheran Church (Reimensnyder), 41, 139, 141  
    Trinity Lutheran Church, St. Louis, Mo. (Walther), 18, 19, 139, 141  
    Williston Congregational Church, Portland, Me. (Clark), 8, 140 causes, 139-141, 143 influence, 139-141  
Pledge, 138  
Poland, youth movement in, 6  
Portland, Me., Christian Endeavor founded, 8, 140  
Prayer, power of, 140  
Press  
    influence of, 149  
    support of, 146  
*see also* Augustana Synod Luther League, General Luther League, Walther League
- Preus, J. A. O., quoted, 102  
Printing press, effect on education, 3  
Progress, *see* Augustana Synod Luther League, General Luther League, Luther League of America, Walther League, Wartburg League, Young People's Luther League  
    *see also* Activities  
Prokopy, P. G., quoted, 33, 36, 142  
Protestant Episcopal Church, 9  
Protestant youth movement, 7  
Protestant world, 3
- Q  
Quakers, 8
- R  
Reading, Penn., General Council organized, 16  
Recapitulation, *see* Augustana Synod Luther League, General Luther League, Luther League of America, Walther League, Wartburg League, Young People's Luther League  
Recognition of movement by church, 137  
Recognition, synodical, 146  
    *see also* Augustana Synod Luther League, Luther League of America, Walther League, Wartburg League, Young People's Luther League  
Recreation, 4  
    *see also* General Luther League, Luther League of America, Walther League, Young People's Luther League  
Recreational institutes, need for, 153  
Reformation, effect on education, 3, 4  
Reformed Church in America, 8  
Reimensnyder, J. M., pioneer in young people's work, 41, 42, 139, 141, 143 quoted, 42  
Renaissance, influence of, 4  
Repression, 145  
Revolt of youth, 4, 6, 7, 147  
Ronning, C. E., quoted, 102  
Rundhaug, G. M., quoted, 103  
Runestad, J. M., quoted, 111  
Rural phase, *see* Luther League of America, Walther League, Young People's Luther League  
Rural societies, 153  
Russia, youth movement in, 6

## INDEX

### S

- St. Louis, Mo., Walther's Young Men's Association organized, 41, 189  
 St. Paul, Minn., Norwegian Lutheran Church organized, 15, 96  
 St. Sebald, Ia., Iowa Synod organized, 14  
 Scope, *see* Extent  
 Secretaryships, *see* Augustana Synod Luther League, General Luther League, Luther League of America, Walther League, Wartburg League, Young People's Luther League  
 Self-expression, 147, 152  
 Service, opportunities for, 155  
 Slovak Synod, Ev. Luth., of America, 14  
 Social phase, 143, 148  
     *see also* General Luther League, Luther League of America, Walther League, Wartburg League, Young People's Luther League  
 Somerset, O., Jt. Ohio Synod organized, 14  
 Stavig, L. M., quoted, 111  
 Stoever, W. C., quoted, 43, 54  
 Strength of leagues, reasons for, 149  
 Stub, H. G., quoted, 100  
 Student movements, foreign, 6-7  
 Student leagues (domestic movement), 126-129  
 Studentsky Domov, 6  
 Success, *see* Influence  
 Summer conference movement, 153  
     *see also* Augustana Synod Luther League, General Luther League, Luther League of America, Walther League, Young People's Luther League  
 Sunday School, 10  
     teaching, 89  
 Suomi Synod, 18, 126  
     Young People's Association, 18, 126  
 Support, financial, of synodical enterprises, 137  
 Synodical Conference, Ev. Luth., of No. America, 14  
     distribution of congregations, 40  
     membership, 39  
     member synods, 14  
 Synod of the Norw. Ev. Luth. Church of America, 15  
 Synods, approval of, 146  
 Synodical approval and cooperation  
     *see* Augustana Synod Luther League, General Luther

League, Luther League of America, Walther League, Wartburg League, Young People's Luther League

Synods once foreign-speaking, 17

### T

Teufel, C. M., quoted, 57  
 Topic system, influence of, 187, 149  
     *see also* Augustana Synod Luther League, General Luther League, Luther League of America, Walther League, Wartburg League, Young People's Luther League

Trabert, G. H., quoted, 8

Travelers' welfare work, 153  
     *see also* Walther League, hospice work

Twentieth century, 17

### U

Unattached societies, 150

United Brethren, 10

United Danish Ev. Luth. Church, 18, 128

Central Committee of Young People's Leagues, 18, 123  
 Peterson, J. C., 124

United Evangelical Church, 10

United Lutheran Church, 16, 17  
     merger, influence of movement on, 137

*see also* Luther League of America

United Norw. Lutheran Church of America, 16, 95-96

United Presbyterian Church, 10

United Society of Christian Endeavor, *see* Christian Endeavor

United Synod of the South, 16, 58  
     *see also* Luther League of America

### V

Value, *see* Influence

### W

Walther, C. F. W., pioneer in young people's work, 18, 19, 139, 141, 148  
     quoted, 146

WALTHER LEAGUE, 14, 18-40, 130-131

achievements, 24, 27-36, 180-181

activities, 21, 26-36, 40

administration, form of, 38, 131

adolescence, period of, 23, 34

age of league, 132

aims, 22, 28, 38, 40

American Lutheran Publicity Bureau, 29

appraisal, 24, 37, 40

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

- approval, synodical appeal for, 27  
see also synodical approval and coöperation  
Arcadia, Mich., summer camp movement, 33  
Baltimore, Md., 1926 convention, 36, 38  
beginnings of league, 20-22  
*Bible Student* launched, 33  
Bible study, 29, 32-33, 40  
Buffalo, N. Y., 26  
league established, 20-22  
1918 convention, 29  
General Union of Lutheran Young People's and Young Men's Associations, 20  
first officers, 21  
Young Men's Association, Trinity Luth. Church, 20  
cause, 19, 23  
champions, 18, 23-26  
Chicago, Ill.  
1919 convention, 30  
headquarters removed to, 32  
Synodical Conference, 1906 session, 27  
church, relation to, 23, 25, 38, 40  
Civil War, cause of early failure, 19  
clergy, attitude of, 30, 39  
clerical awakening, 23-26  
*Concordia Junior Messenger*, 34  
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo.  
campus visited, 88  
Luther statue unveiled, 27  
confirmed young people, 35  
appeal for, 27  
constitution, aims, 40  
first constitution, aims, 22  
conventions, influence of, 37  
correspondence study course, 32  
crisis, 25-26  
decentralization, 36  
deaconess endeavor, 38  
Detroit, Mich.  
early efforts, 19, 20  
1920 synodical convention, 38  
Luth. Young Men's Association, 20  
distribution of congregations, rural and urban, 39  
distribution of young people's societies, rural and urban, 40  
districts, interrelation of, 36  
drifting, danger of, 23  
early efforts, 18-19  
educational endeavor, 32-33, 36  
eighties, 19, 20  
emblem, 23  
entertainment, see social phase established, 22  
Evansville, Ind., 1920 convention, educational dept. created, 31  
expansion, 27-36  
extent, 40  
federate, early efforts to, 18-19  
federation, 18-19  
finances, 27, 36, 38  
first convention, Buffalo, N. Y., 22  
first federation, 20  
first Luth. young people's society, 18  
first officers, 22  
foreign groups, coöperation with, 37  
Ft. Wayne, Ind., 1923 synodical convention approves league, 39  
Germany, relief work in, 35  
"greater service program," 36  
growth, see progress  
headquarters established, 32  
Holyoke, Mass., focus of movement in New England, 23  
hospice endeavor, 21, 26-31, 36  
*Hospice Directory*, 31  
indigent students, 18, 21, 26, 36, 38  
influence, 24, 27, 28, 37, 39  
intersynodical league movement, 19  
Jackson, Mich., crisis passed, 26  
*Junior Bible Student*, 34  
junior endeavor, 27, 29, 31, 33-35, 38  
language, official convention, 28  
leaders  
Bailey, J. M., 32, 33  
Bartelt, C., 22  
Beuermann, A. J., 22  
Brunn, A., 23, 25  
Buenger, J. F., 19  
Burrow, F. W., 21, 22  
Dallmann, W., 25  
Doederlein, T., 35  
Eickhoff, Hulda, 34  
Engelbrecht, E. H., 34, 37  
Estel, M. E., 18  
Fritz, W. C., 21, 23, 26  
Gahwe, H. E., 21, 22, 23  
Gallmeyer, E. J., 37  
Graebner, A. L., 25  
Graebner, T., 33  
Grossmann, A. A., 28, 37  
Hanser, A. T., 21, 23, 24, 27  
Kaltenstein, J., 23  
Klein, F. A., 26, 27, 37  
Kreinheder, R. F., 21, 22  
Kretzmann, P. E., 32, 33, 34  
Kretschmar, K., 32

## INDEX

- Lindemann, P., 37  
Maier, W. A., 30, 37, 38  
Miller, P., 37  
Pieper, F., 29  
Prokopy, P. G., 30, 33, 36  
Roschke, M. J., 32  
Ruesskamp, C. F., 26  
Schack, F. A., 37  
Senne, A., 20, 21  
Sieck, J., 21, 23  
Spiegel, F. C., 23  
Umbach, E., 30  
Walther, C. F. W., 18, 19, 23  
Wurtz, V., 21  
leadership  
    influence of, 36  
    synodical recognition of, 37  
*League Messenger*, 21  
Luther League movement, 19  
Luther Society of Rochester, N. Y., 26  
Luther statue unveiled, 27  
Lutheran Student League, 128  
*Lutheraner*, 18, 19  
    foreign mission appeal, 35  
Luth. Young Men's Association, Detroit, 20  
Lutherland, Pa., summer camp, 33  
lyceum tours, 32  
membership, 40  
Milwaukee, Wis., 24  
    1921 convention, 34  
    headquarters established, 32  
misgivings, 23, 25  
mission endeavor  
    foreign missions, 35, 36, 38  
    home missions, 28, 29, 35-36, 38  
    see also hospice endeavor  
Missouri Synod, 27, 37  
    first young people's society, 18  
    recognition by, 38  
"monument of gratitude," 28  
motto, 26  
movement  
    age of, 132  
    defense of, 25-27, 30  
    misunderstood, 24-27  
    on trial, 25  
    opposition to, 25  
name, 20, 23  
nineties, 20, 22  
Norwegian Synod, recognition by, 39  
Omaha, Nebr., 1922 convention, 34  
"Old Trinity," see Trinity Church  
organ, official, 21, 131  
Orient, mission in, 35  
pioneers, 18, 19  
precedence, national movement  
    over district federations, 185  
press  
    influence of, 21, 27, 131  
    use of, 21  
progress, 26-38  
    causes of, 37  
    in early years, 24  
radio broadcasting station KFUO, 35  
reading course, 29, 32  
recapitulation, 39, 130-131  
recognition, synodical, 38-39  
recreational phase, 29, 33  
Rochester, N. Y., Luther Society  
    begins hospice work, 26  
rural groups  
    isolation of, 24  
    recreation, 33  
rural church, strength of, 39  
St. Louis, Mo.  
    first young people's society, 18  
    Luther statue unveiled, 27  
    1927 convention, 38  
    "big brother" endeavor, 31  
St. Paul, Minn., 1924 convention, 36  
San Francisco, Cal., 1925 convention, 35, 38  
School of Correspondence, 32  
secretaryships, 181  
    appointment of, 30, 32  
social phase, 22, 29, 33  
student movement, 30-31  
    see also Lutheran Students' League  
student work, 30  
summer conference camp movement, 29, 33  
synodical approval and co-operation, 27, 38-39  
synodical committees on young people, 32, 39  
Synodical Conference  
    early efforts to centralize young people's work in, 18-20  
extent, 39  
    promises support, 27  
    supported, 28  
synodical league, official, 39  
"systematic mission endeavor," 33  
topic system, 29, 32, 131  
travelers' welfare work, see hospice endeavor  
Trinity Church, St. Louis, first successful Lutheran young people's society, 18-19  
University of Chicago, first student chapter, 30  
*Vereinsbote*, 21  
voting rights, equal, 26

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

- Walther, C. F. W., founder of first society, 18  
Walther Liga, *see name*  
*Walther League Messenger*, official organ, 21, 181  
Wheat Ridge Sanitarium, 27, 28  
Wheat Ridge Christmas seals, 28  
*While It is Day*, 38  
winter conferences, 33  
Wisconsin Synod Indian mission, supported, 35  
World War, activities in, 28  
Young Men's Association, St. Louis (Walther's), 18-19  
Young Men's Association, Trinity Luth. Church, Buffalo, 20  
young people, early concern in, 23  
Wandervoegel, 7  
Warning against institutionalism, 150-151  
**WARTBURG LEAGUE**, 14, 78-91, 133  
achievements, 85-89  
activities, 80-89  
Advisory Board for Young People's Societies, 82-83  
aims, 81-91  
appraisal, 89-91  
beginnings, 80  
Bible study, 80, 85-87  
cause, 78-80, 85  
champions, 78-80, 84  
Charles City, Ia.  
first district federation organized, 79  
pioneer young people's society, 78  
church extension, 82, 83, 88  
church, relation to, 80, 85, 86  
clergy, attitude of, 79, 80, 85  
concern, clerical and synodical, 80-85  
constitution, 86  
convention plan, 84  
district federations, unaffiliated, 88, 90  
distribution of congregations, rural and urban, 89  
distribution of young people's societies, rural and urban, 90  
Dubuque, Ia.  
conventions, 82-88  
federation effected, 83  
pioneer young people's society, 78  
early efforts, 78  
educational endeavor, 85, 133  
eighties, 78  
entertainment, 80, 87  
established, 83  
federation, 80-85  
reason for, 88  
Federation of Luth. Young People's Associations of Iowa, 79  
first district federation (Ia.), 79  
growth by districts, 79, 80  
indigent student support, 82  
influence, 89-91  
junior endeavor, 85  
language, official convention, 85  
leaders  
    Augustin, A. F., 79  
    Bess, F. B., 79  
    Bodensieck, J., 78, 86  
    Caselmann, E. H., 78, 79  
    Decker, C. A., 79  
    Estock, A. B., 88  
    Fritschel, H. L., 79, 80  
    Fritschel, T., 88, 90  
    Fuchs, S. W., 79  
    Graf, G., 79  
    Hartig, Hugo, 82  
    Hartig, H., 79  
    Hartmann, O., 79  
    Heibig, Clara C., 82  
    Krueger, G., 87  
    Kurtz, W. H., 79  
    Lorch, J. F., 79  
    Luz, H., 78, 79  
    Proehl, C., 79, 80  
    Prottengenier, C. G., 80, 85  
    Rausch, E. H., 85  
    Reu, M., 78, 84, 85  
    Richter, F., 78  
    Schuetz, Rosa, 79  
    Stachling, W., 79  
    Stein, W., 85  
    Wiederanders, C. A., 85, 89  
    Wilke, O. J., 79, 82, 85  
leadership, 85  
*Life of Luther*, 84  
Luther League of Texas, 91, 92  
    *see* Texas Luther League  
Luther statue unveiled, 86  
*Lutheran Herald*, 79, 80  
    encouragement from, 87  
membership, 80, 85, 90  
Mendota, Ill.  
    pioneer young people's society, 78  
1907 synodical action, 80  
mission endeavor  
    foreign, 86-88  
    home, 82-88  
motto, 86  
name, 83, 86  
New Guinea medical mission, 86, 88  
nineties, 78  
Ohio Synod, proposed synodical union with, 87  
organ, official, 80, 87  
organization, type of, 82-84

## INDEX

- origin recent, 78  
Oshkosh, Wis., synodical action, 82  
progress, 88-89  
reading course, 85, 88  
recapitulation, 89-91, 133  
recognition, synodical, 80, 85  
reorganization, 85  
Rock Falls, Ill., pioneer young people's society, 78  
secretaryship, executive, 85  
separation of young men's and young women's societies, 79  
seventies, 78  
social endeavor, 87  
Sunday School and league, mutual relation, 89, 133  
Sunday School Teachers' Institute, relation to league, 85  
synodical approval and coöperation, 80, 88, 85  
Synodical Committee on Young People's Work, 80-87, 133  
Synodical Federation, 83-85  
reorganized, 85  
topic system, 84, 87, 89, 133  
Texas Luther League  
activities and achievements, 91-92  
aims, 92  
Bible study, 92  
Brenham, Texas, organized, 91  
educational endeavor, 92  
established, 91  
finances, 91-92  
Lutheran College, Seguin, Texas, 91  
membership, 92  
Mgebroff, J., 91  
organ, official, 92  
origin independent, 91  
Pfennig, H. W., 91  
pioneer society, 91  
Sagebiel, E. A., 91  
speakers' bureau, 92  
student work, 92  
topic system, 92  
Wartburg League, union with, 92  
*Topics for Young People's Societies*, 84  
Verband Luth. Jugendvereine in Iowa, 79  
Waverly, Ia., synodical action, 85  
young men's and young women's societies separate, 79  
Wiederanders, C. A., quoted, 89  
Williams, G., 141  
Williston Congregational Church, Clark's Christian Endeavor, founded, 8, 140  
Wisconsin Synod organized, 14  
Workers' Educational Association, England, 6  
World War, 6
- Y
- Ylvisaker, N. M., quoted, 100, 105, 112, 113  
Young Men's Association, Walther's, 18-19, 139, 141  
Young Men's Christian Association, 18, 141  
Young people  
concern in Luther's time, 3-4  
Lutheran, estimated numbers, 154  
older group, 152  
outside the movement, 154  
popular education of, in Luther's time, 3  
problem, 10  
responsibility toward church, 153  
revolt, 4  
rise of movements, 11  
self-expression, 5, 144  
training of, in Luther's time, 4  
Young People's Alliance of the Evangelical Association, 10  
Young People's Asso., Cuyler's, 140-141  
Young People's Christian Endeavor Union, 10  
Young People's Christian Union, 10  
Young People's Federation, Luth. Free Church, 124-126  
Young people's groups, early types of, 139-141  
YOUNG PEOPLE'S LUTHER LEAGUE, 16, 98-114, 134  
achievements, 98-112  
activities, *see* progress  
adolescence, period of, 101, 103, 111  
age groups, 103, 106  
aims, 94-102  
Alaska, voyage to, 112  
American Scandinavian Foundation, 104  
appraisal, 113-114  
approval, synodical, 96, 100, 107  
beginnings of league, 96  
Bible study, 98, 110, 114  
boys and girls, separate groups, 106-107  
boys' work, 103, 106, 107  
cause, 98-95  
Chautauquas, Bible, 110  
Central Luther League of Wis., 98  
China, 104, 107  
Choral Union, 95, 107-108, 110  
Lutheran Students' Union, relation to, 108

## LUTHERAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT

- of Young People's League, 95  
church council, league representation on, 100, 107  
clergy, attitude of, 94, 100, 107  
church extension, 101-105  
church, relation to, 96-109, 114  
concern, clerical, 94-112  
Concordia College choir, 110  
conference movement, 112  
confirmed young people a problem, 102, 103, 111  
Consolidated Young People's League, 96  
constitution, 96  
conventions  
    attendance, 97, 101, 104, 110, 134  
    plan, 106  
*Convention Songbook*, 110  
Decorah, Ia., Young People's Association organized, 94  
distribution of congregations, rural and urban, 112-113  
distribution of young people's societies, rural and urban, 113  
districts, provincial, added, 101  
early movements, 98-95  
    Central Luth. League of Wis., 93  
    choral unions, 94, 95  
    Luth. Coll. Sunday Asso., 94  
    Sunday School associations, 94  
    temperance societies, 94  
educational endeavor, 97-111, 134  
eighties, 93  
established, 96  
Federation of Norwegian Young People's societies, 93  
finances, 104-111  
first convention, Red Wing, Minn., 97  
first officers, 96  
girls' work, 106, 107  
Hauge's Synod, Young People's Federation, 96  
influence, 103-114  
institute and conference movement, 112  
junior endeavor, 103-111, 134  
Kenyon, Minn., Young People's League organized, 95  
LaCrosse, Wis., 1922 convention, 99, 101-104  
language problem, 102  
leaders  
    Anderson, C., 94  
    Braaten, T. F., 98  
    Brown, J. N., 96  
    Bruce, G. M., 96  
    Glasoe, P. M., 108  
    Hegland, M., 114  
    Jacobson, J. N., 96  
    Norlie, O. M., 93  
Peterson, J., 102, 104  
Preus, J. A. O., 102  
Ronning, C. E., 102  
Rundhaug, G. M., 103  
Runestad, J. M., 111  
Stavig, L. M., 111  
Stolee, M. J., 95  
Stub, H. G., 100  
Thorpe, C. S., 109  
Tingelstad, O. A., 96  
Waldehand, M. E., 95  
Wee, M. O., 94  
Weswig, C. M., 95  
Xavier, L., 99  
Ylvisaker, N. M., 97, 100, 104, 105, 106, 112, 113  
leadership, 96, 99, 100, 112  
Luther Coll. Concert band, 110  
Luther League of America, 93, 95  
*Lutheran Church Herald*, official organ, 96-97, 99-100, 107, 110, 112  
*Lutheran Herald*, quoted, 94  
Lutheran Student Editorial Association, 99  
Lutheran Students' Union, 98-100, 108, 134  
    Choral Union, relation to, 108  
    of Young People's League, 95  
Madagascar, 104, 105, 107  
magazine, monthly, 112, 134  
membership, 113  
merger of synodical leagues, 96  
Minneapolis, Minn., 1925 convention, 104-108  
mission endeavor, 134  
    foreign, 99-110  
    home, 98-110  
motto, 98  
music, ministry of, 107-110  
name, 96  
nineties, 93, 94  
Norse American Centennial Celebration, 104  
Norwegian Lutheran Church, 96-113  
Norwegian Synod, 94, 96  
organ, official, 96, 97, 100, 110  
organization  
    extent of, 101, 113  
    type of, 97, 134  
pioneers, 93-95  
pioneer endeavors, 93-95  
progress, 96-112  
radio broadcasting station  
    WCAL, 106, 109  
recapitulation, 112, 134  
recognition, synodical, 96-101, 107  
recreational phase, 104, 110  
Red Wing, Minn., 1919 convention, 97

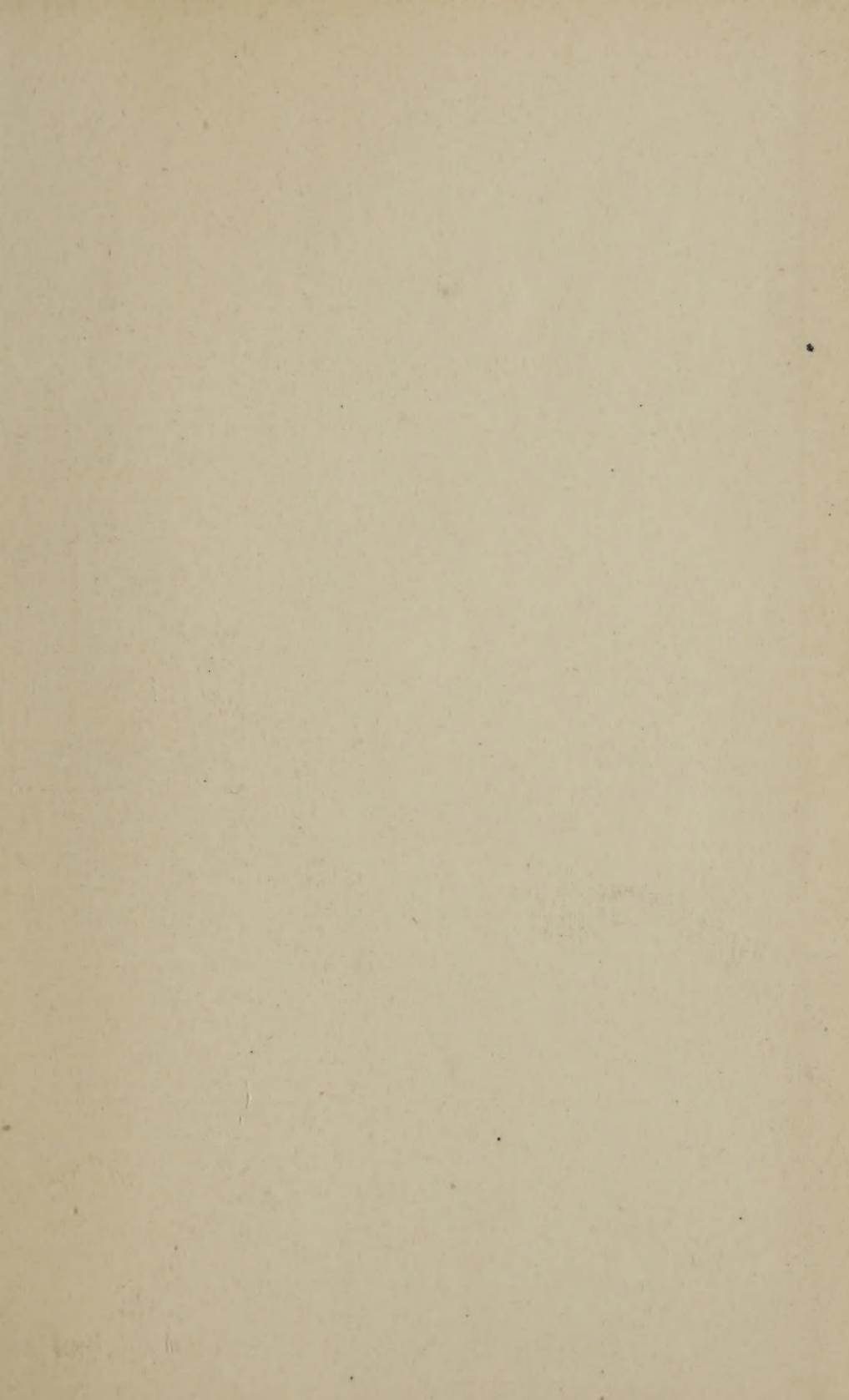
## INDEX

- rural phase, 98, 103  
rural strength, 113  
St. Olaf Luth. Choir, 110  
St. Paul, Minn.  
    Choral Union organized, 108  
    Students' Union organized, 98  
synodical and league merger, 96  
scholarship fund, 105, 110  
scope, international, 101  
Seattle, Wash., 1927 convention,  
    110-111  
secretaryships  
    appointment of, 97, 104, 106,  
    109, 112  
    executive, 97  
    a church officer, 100  
separation by sex, 107  
singing, *see* music  
social phase, 110, 111  
Student Pastors' Association, 110  
student work, 106-109, 134  
summer conference Bible schools,  
    110  
synodical approval and co-operation,  
    96, 100, 107  
synodical merger, 96  
topic system, 93-110  
United Norwegian Church, 95-96  
World War, activities in, 105  
young people a mission field, 101,  
    111  
Young People's Association of  
    Norwegian Synod, 94, 96  
Young People's Federation of  
    Hauge's Synod, 96  
Young People's League of United  
    Norwegian Church, 95, 96  
Zululand, 104, 107
- Young people's movement  
achievements, 148, 152  
age, 180  
aim threefold, 150  
aims, 142, 146-148  
aims alike, 142  
American, 8-10  
answer to youth needs, 146  
appraisal, 149-150  
causes, 141, 150  
church  
    relation to, 153-155  
    value to, 152  
clergy, attitude of, 143-146  
church organization, part of, 154  
common aim, 136  
congregational societies first, 135  
defense, 144  
division by synods, 12  
domestic, not a "youth movement," 147  
entertainment, desire for, 143  
estimate, *see* appraisal  
extension, reasons for, 154  
future, 151-153  
growth, 146  
hopes fulfilled, 150  
ideal of, 153  
improvement essential, 152  
influence, 146, 150  
    on U. L. C. merger, 137  
justified, 143  
leadership  
    aim of, 148  
    tested, need of, 152  
local society, importance of, 152  
membership, total, 11  
motive, 151  
origin, 42, 141  
permanence, no assurance of, 151  
pioneer endeavors, patterned  
    after, 141  
pioneers, 139-141, 143  
pragmatic test, 151  
preparation for church membership,  
    143  
press, support of, 146  
recognition of, by church, 137  
relation to church, 152-155  
rise from within church, 147  
self-expression, 150  
spiritual aim, 150  
strength, 152  
    reasons for, 149  
structure not an end, 150  
success, 152, 154  
support, financial, argument for,  
    155  
triumph, 139, 146-147, 150  
value, 152  
values, spiritual, 150, 154  
youth movements, foreign, con-  
    trast to, 147
- Young People's Religious Society,  
    Reimensnyder's, 41, 139, 141  
Young people's work,  
    alternative to, 154  
    burden of, 152  
    common aim, 10, 136  
    future of, 151-152  
    motive, 151  
    test of, 151  
    typical phases, 153  
Youth-awakening, 5, 143  
    simultaneous in all denomina-  
        tions, 135  
Youth consciousness, 4  
Youth, Luther's concern in, 3-4  
Youth movement, foreign, 6-8  
    characteristics, 6-8  
    modern, purpose of, 6  
    religion in, 7  
Youth, renaissance of, in Europe, 6  
Youth, status of, in early times,  
    3-5
- Z
- Zion Society for Israel, 123

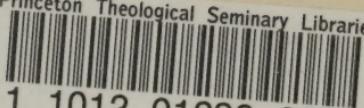








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